CAN YOUNG PEOPLE RELIABLY REPORT ON THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES OF BULLYING VIA A SELF-REPORT INTERVIEW

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Abstract

Bullying is a behaviour that is becoming increasingly common in schools and there is evidence to suggest it can begin during the kindergarten years. However, there is a gap in the research for bullying among children aged under 7 years. The focus of the present study was on school-aged children aged 5 to 7 years. The aim was to determine whether children in this age group could reliably report on their own experiences of bullying and if so, could a self-report interview measure be developed to reliably identify bullying in this age group. The results indicate that the children in this study were able to report bullying experiences and how this made them feel, but they were not able to report on the timing, nor the frequency of the bullying. This could be due to factors such as their age and cognitive development and the school's pro-active anti-bullying policy. Future research could further develop this self-report measure and pilot with a larger population in the hope that it could be used as a regular screening tool for 5- to 7-year-old children in schools.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Bullying is increasingly becoming an important focus in schools as high profile cases and research on the prevalence and effects of bullying are circulated in the media. As children learn to socialise with their peers bullying can begin in children as young as those attending kindergarten, and continue through to adulthood (Gillies-Rezo & Bosacki, 2003; Perren & Alsaker, 2006; Vlachou, Andreou, Botsoglou & Didaskalou, 2011). However, the majority of bullying research only accounts for those aged 8 years to adulthood and a very limited amount of research exists for the age range of 5 to 7 years.

Prevalence

The importance of continuing research into bullying is evident in prevalence studies from New Zealand and internationally. Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, and Rimpela (2000) cited the prevalence of bullying among primary school students across the United States of America at around 5 to 15%. They also found that bullying occurs on a weekly basis or even more frequently. This percentage does not include one-off experiences of bullying. A survey of four primary schools with 433 children aged 10 to 11 years in rural America was conducted by Harris and Petrie (2003) to determine the prevalence and types of bullying present. Being called names and having rumours spread about them were reported the most (76% and 70% respectively); being left out of activities (66%), being hit or kicked (62%), having things stolen (42%), and being threatened (41%) were also common behaviours reported by the children. Glew et al. (2005) conducted a study to determine the prevalence and effects of bullying in a public school in the United States of America with 245 children

aged 8 to 12 years. With a questionnaire based loosely on the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ) (1993), they found that the playground was the most common site for bullying to take place (71%), followed by the classroom (46%).

Carroll-Lind and Kearney's (2004) study conducted with 11 schools throughout New Zealand, with a total of 1480 participants aged 7 to 18 years, found 63% of participants had been bullied in the previous year. Maxwell and Carroll-Lind's (1997) findings suggest that each year at least half of all school children experience bullying and that 10% experience bullying on a weekly basis. Cram, Doherty and Pocock's (1995, cited in Carroll-Lind & Kearney, 2004) study of nearly 1000 children from primary, intermediate and secondary schools in South Auckland showed a high prevalence of bullying, with 76% of children reporting bullying and a similar percentage reported witnessing bullying. In this study, approximately 1 in 10 children reported they were bullied several times a week during the school term. Olweus (1993) suggested that as students get older, bullying decreases at least in terms of physical aggression. However, more covert bullying methods such as exclusion and cyber-bullying become more prevalent as children develop emotionally and have access to alternative means of communication such as mobile phones and social networking websites.

Bullying

Categorisation of bullying in younger children. Bullying can be categorised into two types; either direct bullying such as physical violence and name-calling, or indirect bullying such as gossiping and exclusion. The way in which bullying is measured can vary. Different instruments measure different constructs such as those that focus solely on bullies, while others may cover bullies, bully/victims and victims in a single questionnaire (Sullivan, 2000). Bullying is also sometimes confused with aggression, of which Beran (2006) defined two types, reactive aggression and proactive aggression. Reactive aggression is a response to

frustration and anger whereas proactive aggression is exerted as a way of achieving a goal. For the latter to be considered bullying the aggression must be unprovoked, repetitive and used as a means of achieving a social goal (Beran, 2006). The bullies are also likely to be fulfilling other goals when they bully others, including the possible enjoyment they get from hurting others.

Defining bullying. While definitions of bullying vary, the most agreed upon definition was suggested by Dan Olweus (1993). Olweus was a pioneer of bullying research in the 1970's, and his research has been used as a basis for more recent studies. He proposed four criteria necessary for behaviour to be defined as bullying. These included: *repetition of negative behaviours; a notable power imbalance; intention to harm and lack of provocation from the victim;* with the key characteristic being the *power differential* (Olweus, 1993). According to these criteria, this is where teasing and bullying is different. A one-off play-fight should not be classed as bullying as it does not occur repeatedly, and neither should playful teasing as there is no intention for harm. Sullivan (2009) suggested that bullying can present in many different forms. For example, it can be short term or continue for many years, and sometimes it is premeditated whereas other times it is spontaneous.

Bullying is difficult to define as it varies across age, gender and the situation in which it occurs. One of the biggest debates in defining bullying is the problem with misinterpreting teasing as bullying (for example see, Farrington, 1993; Harris & Petrie, 2003). Farrington (1993) suggested that teasing is considered to be a normal part of growing up but becomes bullying when there is intimidation and distress felt by the victim. Children often use the word 'teasing' when asked to report on what they know about bullying (Harris & Petrie, 2003). This could make it difficult to determine whether children aged between 5 and 7 years can distinguish between the two different behaviours of teasing and bullying.

Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, and Liefooghe (2002) suggested that there are several other terms which can often be mixed up with bullying by children. Aside from teasing, harassment (this tends to be in terms of racial or sexual harassment) and abuse (which is usually defined in terms of a family context) tends to also cause confusion. Furthermore, where an imbalance of power is not considered necessary, children may not be able to differentiate between bullying and physical fighting. Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, and Liefooghe's (2002) study supports previous claims that while younger children aged 5 to 7 years can identify aggression, they cannot distinguish between different forms of aggression such as physical bullying, verbal aggression such as name-calling, and social exclusion. The authors suggest this may be because younger children may be exposed to more experiences of physical bullying than verbal or exclusionary forms of bullying. However, while these physical forms are more widespread in children aged 5 to 7 years, verbal bullying and social exclusion are also present in this age group and even within younger age groups such as kindergarten-aged children. The authors suggest that lack of experience or social skills to identify and report on more indirect forms of bullying may not be the only reason for under-reporting. An indirect behaviour that is likely to be present in 5- to 7-year-olds is exclusion, for example, when a child repeatedly excludes another child from lunch time games.

Measurement. It is important to consider when developing an instrument to identify victims of bullying whether or not to use a standard definition. Vallaincourt, McDougall, Hymel, Krygmsna, Miller, Stiver and Davis (2008) suggest that providing a definition is critical when measuring bullying. However, they found this has proven to be difficult in the development of existing instruments due to the differing definitions of bullying. Their study found that students who were provided a definition reported being victimised less than the students not provided with a definition. Vallaincourt et al. (2008) suggested that students who had not been given a definition were basing their responses on their own personal

understanding of bullying, which may not have been the same as the interviewers understanding. They suggested measures of bullying should include a clear definition so that the interviewer knows what the children are reporting. Smith et al. (2002) support this point. In their study of children aged 8 to 14 years, they found that a definition of bullying was important, as the children could then accurately and reliably report on the prevalence of bullying. This allowed them to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and to clarify individual rights and legal responsibilities. They found this to be important for children aged 8 years as they found it difficult to discriminate between aggressive behaviour and bullying.

Gender. Gender differences in the prevalence of different types of bullying have also been investigated. Perren and Alsaker (2006) and Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick, (2005) have found boys were more likely to engage in bullying behaviours to gain power and dominance, whereas girls were more likely to use exclusion as a form of dominance in social settings.

Effects of Bullying

The effects associated with bullying, either as a bully, a victim or a bully/victim are numerous, and many of these effects stay with the individual well into adulthood. In a study of 11 to 13 year olds, Lind and Maxwell (1996, cited in Sullivan, 2000) found that in terms of the worst things the children had experienced, the death of someone close was first, followed by being bullied by other children. Effects linked with bully victimisation include poor self-esteem, a sense of hopelessness, and mental health difficulties.

Characteristics of bully/victims. Veenstra, Lindenberg, Oldehinkel, De Winter, Verhulst, and Ormel's (2005) have conducted extensive research on the characteristics of bully/victims or those children who both bully and are being bullied by others, and the effect exposure to bullying has on this population. These children are likely to have become bullies in response

to being victimised themselves. Similar to bullies, bully/victims tend to have a high level of aggression and are often disliked by their peers; however the bully/victims have been found to have the worst outcomes. These include increased levels of violence and hostility, depression, anxiety, social isolation and psychosomatic symptoms, such as headaches and stomach-aches.

Characteristics of at-risk children. Those children more at risk of being bullied have been found to exhibit three kinds of behavioural characteristics. The first characteristic is internalising behaviours such as being socially withdrawn, crying easily and submitting to a bully's demands (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Hodges and Perry (1999) suggest that these internalising tendencies probably lessen the ability and likelihood of the victim to assert themselves during bullying episodes. Secondly, victims tend to be physically weak and display externalising problems such as argumentativeness and dishonesty. Thirdly, these children also tend to lack friends and/or be rejected by peers.

While presenting with the three characteristics mentioned increases the risk of bullying, Harris and Petrie (2003) found that having friends can act as a protective factor. Farrington (1993) suggested that bullies are quite likely to come from families of a low socio-economic status who have been raised by those lacking in effective parenting techniques. He suggests bullies tend to be impulsive and perform poorly at school; a finding that Harris and Petrie (2003) support.

Consequences of victims of bullying. Kumpulainen, Räsänen and Puura (2001) concluded, from their study with 420 students and 423 parents on the effects of bullying, that children involved in bullying were more likely to have mental health difficulties than children not involved in bullying, and that the most common diagnoses were attention deficit disorder, oppositional defiant and conduct disorder and depression. Their results indicated that over two thirds of the participants identified as bully/victims or as bullies had psychiatric

disorders. The direction of causality can run both ways between victimisation and mental health problems. Children with mental health concerns may be more likely to be bullied as they may be less capable of defending themselves, or they may use alternative methods of countering the bullying such as avoidance which may in turn further encourage the bullying and bullying behaviours.

Farrington (1993) and Rigby (1996) suggest that victims of bullying often perform poorly at school and are more likely to be rejected by peers, and have poor self-esteem and social skills. Being a victim is known to be a long-lasting situation that may be repeated in new settings, and for a long period of time (Farrington, 1993; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000; Hodges & Perry, 1999). Byrne (1999) found that bullying victims often feel guilty, and a sense of shame and failure because they cannot cope with the bullying. Victims of bullying are also at risk of suffering long-term psychological problems including loneliness, self-esteem issues, psychosomatic complaints and depression, in addition to an increased risk of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts (e.g., Harris & Petrie, 2003; Rigby, 1996;).

Hodges and Perry (1999) found in their study of 173 kindergarten and primary school aged children that those with a history of victimisation had difficulties with personal and social adjustment, but interestingly that victimisation did not predict a loss of friends but a change in the nature of their friends. Bullied children tended to seek out other children who had been victimised, or were depressed and withdrawn; so while they may have friends the nature of their social group may reinforce the personal and social conditions which encourage victimisation. Hunter and Boyle (2002) added to these findings, suggesting that if the bullying is indirect or relational, such as exclusion and gossiping, the victim may find it difficult to know what to do in response, and therefore become isolated. Hawker and Boulton (2001) found that this type of indirect bullying, along with verbal bullying, often resulted in internalising difficulties but physical bullying does not result in internalising difficulties.

Hodges and Perry (1999) conducted a review of the longitudinal studies that focused on the consequences of peer victimisation and found only three studies which met their criteria. One of these studies, conducted by Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996), reported that kindergarten children who experienced victimisation in the first half of a school year were more likely than their peers, who had not been bullied, to avoid school and more likely to report feeling lonely in the second half of the year. The findings from Olweus' (1992, cited in Hodges and Perry, 1999) study suggested there was an increased likelihood of middle-school boys who were victimised by their peers to exhibit more signs of depression and low self-esteem 10 years later in adulthood than their peers who had not been bullied. From the findings, Hodges and Perry (1999) found that peer rejection is a predictor of bullying in several ways. Firstly, the bully is not likely to face retaliation if their victim is rejected by peers. Children who are rejected are likely to be alone during break times and as a result be more available and salient as targets for the bully/bullies. Rejected children also have less support and knowledge on how to handle conflicts and threats of bullying from their peers. Taking into account this research, it may be useful in a future measure of bullying to question the child about their friends and the quality of their friendships.

Glew et al. (2005) found that children who reported not feeling safe at school or feeling like they did not belong at school were more likely to be involved in bullying than bystanders. Bullies and victims were also more likely to report feeling sad most days and have lower achievement scores than those not involved in bullying. Lower achievement scores may be a result of poor concentration and anxiety reported by those being bullied (Glew et al., 2005).

Bullying as a barrier to learning. Beran (2006) suggested involvement in bullying at school is detrimental to a child as it interferes with their social development and acts as a barrier to learning. She found that children who are bullied may interact with others less in

the classroom as these children lack the confidence to do so, therefore decreasing their learning opportunities. From his extensive research in bullying, Rigby (1996) found that children who are bullied often have difficulty concentrating at school and may avoid school if the bullying becomes too much for them. Both these aspects are likely to have a negative effect on their academic achievement.

Educational policies. In New Zealand, Section 60 of the Education Act (1989), states that schools are required to investigate and remove any barriers to learning (MOE, 1989), in addition to creating a safe physical and emotional environment for learning. Sullivan (2000) suggests that isolation and exclusion caused by bullying can have detrimental social effects. He also suggested bullying effects self-esteem and school work and victims may not have the self-esteem to excel and stand out. The isolation that comes with bullying may lead the victims to feel incompetent in all domains, not just socially but physically and emotionally as well.

More recently the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) model has been implemented by the Ministry of Education ([MOE], 2013) in New Zealand. The PB4L model originated from Sugai's (2009) concepts of Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI) and School-wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS). This model emphasises a universal screening programme focused on antisocial behaviour and poor academic achievement in children in schools. This multi-systemic approach that includes the child, their family and the school, combined with evidence-based practice, has been shown to be an effective way of creating a safe learning and behaviour environment (MOE, 2013). The New Zealand model focuses on early identification and altering the school environment to make positive change in children's behaviour.

Basing reports of children's experiences on interviews with their parents or teacher without involvement from the child is also contrary to the UN's Convention of the Child

(1989). Children's participation has been associated with the goal of respecting children's rights, a goal embodied in the Convention and in the development of their ability to participate which, according to Lansdown (2005) is seen as an enabling rather than a restrictive idea (cited in Crivello, Camfield, & Woodhead, 2008). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child have advocated for children in terms of their rights to "provision, participation and protection". These rights extend to bullying and other forms of harassment (pp. 2-3; as cited in Farrell, 1999). Farrell suggests that bullying is a world-wide human rights issue. The Convention places an emphasis on children's right to participate in issues concerning them, be it their learning or functioning. Providing the children with a 'voice', rather than relying on parent or teacher reports, may also be helpful for schools and their implementation of anti-bullying policies. In addition, the effects of bullying have become clearer in terms of overall health, wellbeing and children's ability to learn. The need for children to feel safe physically and emotionally is supported by the Education Review Office (Sullivan, 2000), where a policy statement stated that:

"the educational and social development of students at school is closely linked to their physical and emotional safety. Students cannot learn effectively if they are physically or verbally abused, victims of violence or bullying, or if their school surroundings are unsafe" (p. 1).

A whole school approach is vital when addressing bullying in schools (New Zealand Police [NZP], n.d.; Wellbeing@School (W@S), 2012). W@S is an initiative from the Ministry of Education developed as part of the Positive Behaviour for Learning Action Plan and was written by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), which emphasises a whole school approach to bullying. A disadvantage to the W@S model is that

it only targets children from Years 5 to 13 and misses out the younger children in Years 1 to 3. Vlachou et al. (2011) and Gillies-Rezo, and Bosacki (2003) indicate that bullying and unpleasant social exchanges can start as early as preschool. This is when a child's lack of social interactions is first made salient. There now appears to be a gap in the MOE system in the assessment of younger school children for bullying or being bullied. While the development of a screening tool to identify bully victims in children aged 5 to 7 years will be useful it may also be useful to use in conjunction with the self-review process suggested by the W@S initiative.

Bullying as a violation of basic needs

Sullivan (2000) suggested that Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs is an important theory to consider as the basic need of wellbeing should be met. For children who are being bullied, this basic need may not be met. Maslow states that the most basic need of food, water, shelter, friendship and love needs to be met before self-esteem, confidence and creativity can be achieved. A child who is constantly bullied by their peers may not experience friendship therefore, according to Maslow, may not develop confidence and self-esteem and were likely to feel inferior and adopt a sense of helplessness. Sullivan (2000) added that children who are repeatedly bullied are not only denied the experience of friendship and healthy social interactions but are also led to feel incompetent and as a result, have difficulty forming relationships in the future.

Ability to Self-Report

Exposure to bullying, either as a victim, a bystander or a bully, is distressing and can be developmentally harmful; therefore, it is important to determine how to identify children who are bullied. This concern raises the issue of the extent to which young children are able to reliably indicate that they are being bullied.

A controversial issue for researchers when working with young children is their ability to reliably self-report on their personal bullying experiences. Existing measures for bullying for those aged 8 to 18 years are predominantly self-report measures, while those aimed at children less than 8 years of age are primarily teacher, therapist or parent reports. Harris and Petrie (2003) found that while bullying such as teasing, being called bad names and being lied about, hit, isolated, threatened, having things stolen or being excluded are all relatively common, these incidents often go unreported. Research indicates that bullying often goes unreported for several reasons, the main reason being that reporting is not considered socially acceptable (see Boulton, 1994; Sullivan, 2000). The victim may fear further bullying if they were to expose the bully's behaviour to a teacher or parent. Adair et al. (1999, cited in Sullivan, 2000) also state that many school children believe that nothing will be able to stop the bullying, and that children who are bullied often carry with them a sense of hopelessness. Common targets of bullying often feel ashamed of the victimisation and have poor self-esteem and social skills, all of which make it difficult for them to discuss their concerns with either the bully or an adult (see Farrington, 1993; Rigby, 1996; Byrne, 1999). All of these aspects may also contribute to the under-reporting of bullying by victims.

An issue of particular concern is that young children's memory may be too susceptible to suggestibility and therefore children may not be able to provide reliable reports of past experiences, especially when requested in forensic settings such as when giving testimonies . Pezdek and Hodge (1999) conducted a study with 19, 5- to 7-year-old children and 20 children aged 9 to 12 years of age to determine under what circumstances a child's memory is not vulnerable to suggestibility. They attempted to plant false memories, one plausible and the other not, in their participants and found that it was more likely for a plausible event to be implanted especially if memories or knowledge of similar events is already known. However, they also hypothesised that this may differ for the young age group (5 to 7-year-

olds) as they have a smaller knowledge base to draw from and therefore may not be able to distinguish between plausible and implausible events as well as the older children (9-12 year olds). The authors findings confirmed this hypothesis; while none of the children in the older age group reported remembering the implausible event, 3 of the 19 children in the younger group did. This result has also been found in adults under the same conditions, suggesting that similar processes underlie suggestibility in both adults and children (Pezdek, Finger & Hodge, 1997; Pezdek & Hodge, 1999). This finding suggests while care should be taken when interviewing children, their susceptibility to remembering false events may not be so different from adults.

Measures for self-reporting on bullying. Aside from under-reporting, Boulton (1994) suggested the sensitive and emotive nature of the topic of bullying also make reliable self-report measures for detecting bullying difficult to design. Ahmad and Smith (1990, cited in Boulton, 1994) found that children who are bullied regularly may be more likely to disclose information in an anonymous questionnaire rather than a face-to-face interview. If an interview is required, Crothers and Levinson (2004) suggested that children are more likely to reveal sensitive information if the interview is conducted by someone outside of the school system. It may also put the child at ease if their teacher introduces them to the interviewer prior to the interview. Interviews are also best conducted in a relaxed setting with as few distractions as possible (McConaughy, 2000).

Similar to reporting incidences of sexual or physical abuse, it is important to know when a child was bullied and if subsequent incidences of bullying occur, as repetition signifies more serious bullying experiences than a one-off incident. However, research indicates that to be able to report temporally on a past event, there needs to be an understanding of the language used to describe bullying with words such as past, before and after (Orbach & Lamb, 2007). A study was conducted by Orbach and Lamb (2007) with children aged 4 to 10 years to

determine how often children refer to temporal attributes when describing allegedly experienced bullying events. They found that the frequency with which children used temporal references increased with age, specifically in terms of sequencing (the ability to place events in chronological order), dating (the ability to make inferences regarding when an event was likely to have occurred), and with the number of occurrences. Duration and frequency were not mentioned enough to warrant analysis across all ages. These data revealed a possible difficulty in interviewing children about bullying as it suggests 4- to 10-year-old children may not have the ability to report how often an event has occurred.

For behaviour to be considered bullying, it is generally thought to be repeated. Therefore, this information may need to be gathered from sources other than the children directly involved or a technique developed to help children report how often they have been bullied.

Smith and Sharp (1994) conducted a study in Sheffield in the United Kingdom during 1989 and 1990 with over 6,000 children from 24 primary and secondary schools to investigate the frequency of bullying in the area. The project involved each school implementing a 'whole-school' policy on bullying, which consisted of several interventions aimed to decrease and monitor bullying. The 'whole-school' approach was made up of training and development of teachers in the bullying intervention, all of whom were provided with resource materials. Each school set its own target for when the policy would be complete and suitable for implementation. Additional interventions were discussed with the schools for possible inclusion in the policy. These included curriculum-based strategies where bullying awareness would be integrated into the curriculum and assertiveness training for victims of bullying including skills aimed at resolving conflict and increasing social skills and self-esteem. The policies were not standardised, however, a common framework was introduced in regards to training procedures and materials. As a baseline measure prior to the intervention's implementation, a questionnaire was administered to students and teachers in

each school. This included the frequency, nature and location of any bullying incidents. The questionnaires were self-report but, if deemed necessary, a teacher assisted and read out the items for the children involved. Once the interventions were in place, nine factors were monitored regarding the teachers, parents and children's involvement in the intervention and the effectiveness of the project. The extent, nature and location of any bullying were monitored, with questionnaires administered to children and teachers twice each term. The survey results produced three clear trends. They found that students across all age groups were more likely to tell their parents/caregiver rather than their teacher if they were being bullied, but that primary school students were more likely than secondary students to tell an adult of a bullying incident. It was also found that the level of reporting increased with the frequency of bullying, so those being bullied more often were more likely to report it. Students also reported that teachers were more likely than other students to stop bullying if they witnessed it. The researchers found substantial reductions in bullying particularly in primary schools once the intervention had been implemented. Similar to other research in the area of bullying, this study did not consider pupils under the age of 9 years even though these students are likely to have provided valuable information. However, due to the method of monitoring with self-report measures, the need to interview younger students individually would have been unrealistic for a study of this magnitude.

Adair, Dixon, Moore and Sutherland (2000) conducted a study with a predominantly older age group with 2066 students in Years 9 to 13, from seven secondary schools in the North Island of New Zealand. A pencil and paper instrument, based on the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire, was administered and focused on students' experiences of bullying, including the nature, frequency and effects of any experiences. Parents were given information about the study and gave consent for their child's involvement. Two classes from each year in each of the seven schools were randomly selected and given the option to participate. The

measure was self-report; however, their teacher was in the room during the administration if assistance was required by any student. Of the 2066 students involved, 81% had observed bullying but only 21% reported their observations. Students reported that the perpetrators of the bullying were the same age or older, (39% and 30%, respectively) whereas being bullied by younger children was reported only 8% of the time. These results are in accordance with results from Vallaincourt et al's. (2008) study.

Self-report on emotions. It is believed that the development of emotional concepts in children begins with the ability to experience and identify different emotions in themselves before developing the ability to recognise emotional states in others (Smiley & Huttenlocher, 1989). Early concepts of emotion are first associated with a child's own internal state and as they get older, become associated with facial expressions and body language (Harris & Saarni, 1989; Smiley & Huttenlocher, 1989). This theory may help to explain why a younger child's repertoire of emotions is often limited to emotions that can easily be conveyed through facial expressions, for example, happiness, sadness and anger. Harris and Saarni (1989) also noted that while children use facial expressions to identify emotions they also develop causal links in response to situations that are likely to cause specific emotions. As their internal states develop they become more attuned to their own and others' emotional states without relying on the causal links they have learned.

It is also likely that social experience plays a role in emotional development where the more emotions the child is exposed to, the larger their emotional repertoire will be (Harris & Saarni, 1989). Fivush and Baker-Ward (2005) suggest that children whose parents use internal states language, such as, 'understand', 'comprehend', 'emotional processing', and a variety of positive and negative emotions, when talking about their experiences will express thoughts and feelings themselves more often. They suggest that parents who talk about their own emotions and encourage their children to do so are helping their child cope better with

emotional experiences in the future, including bullying incidences. The same applies for siblings. Therefore, when considering the socialisation processes it is important to interview children with regards to their ability to self-report their emotions. Fivush and Baker-Ward (2005) indicated that using more internal states language is also better long-term, as families who use this language report lower rates of anxiety and depression and better emotional and physical well-being of their children. This ability to process emotions appears to have an effect on how children self-report on negative experiences such as bullying after a period of time, and whether the way in which they have immediately recalled the event has an effect on their wellbeing when they are older.

Harris and Saarni (1989) and Denham (2007) suggest that throughout a child's primary school years they begin to understand that several emotions can occur simultaneously. Children also gather more information about an event before deciding what kind of emotion is being portrayed and they also draw on other people's personal history when gauging the individuals' emotional reaction. Durbin (2010) and Harter and Whitesell (1989) indicate this understanding is unlikely to begin to develop until the child is at least 7 years old. However, Durbin (2010) provide evidenced that 3 to 6 year olds can distinguish and report on positive and negative emotions, and Harter and Whitesell (1989) suggest that 7 year olds are able to apply two emotions, either positive or negative but not a combination, to one situation. For example, in a study where children reported how they felt during a variety of episodes, reports of sadness were very rare when responding to happiness episodes (Durbin, 2010). However, as a result of this limited ability to understand that several emotions can occur simultaneously children aged 5 to 7 years may have the tendency to misinterpret others behaviour in the playground and either under-report or over-report bullying depending on their past experiences.

Gordon (1989) claimed that exposure to different emotions shape a child's understanding of, and ability to, express a range of emotions. The values and beliefs practiced in the social environment shape a child's understanding of emotions, and in many cases regulate their exposure to particular emotions. The social environment also provides the opportunity to express some emotions. Children also learn to regulate their emotions relating to the goals they wish to obtain. They begin to learn that expressing a certain emotion in one setting may not be conducive to achieving the same goal in another setting (Denham, 2007; Bretherton, Fris, Zahn-Waxler, & Ridgeway, 1986). This aspect may affect their self-reporting of emotions in an interview setting as a child may wish to keep, for example, the fact that they are being bullied by another child to themselves. Harter and Whiteshell's (1989) study of 5- to 11-year-olds supports this idea, with the finding that for children aged 5 years there was a 90% chance they will not report an incident they are ashamed of to their parents or to another adult.

There are two theories regarding young children's ability to reliably self-report on their emotions. Fivush and Baker-Ward (2005) support the claim that very young children do have the cognitive ability to provide information regarding their emotions, as does Durbin (2010) who found that children are able to self-report appropriate emotions to specific episodes. The reporting of emotions may not be through language alone, alternative methods such as picture cards are often employed to gain information on a child's inner state.

Young children's ability to self-report on past experiences is an area of contention within the research on children, and as a result, many assessments of children under 8 years are focused on information gathered from the child's teacher or parents through informal interviews or self-report measures; the former of which are predominantly used as secondary sources (Crothers & Levinson, 2004). However, as authors such as Crothers and Levinson (2004) and Orbach and Lamb (2007) have found, young children are capable of providing

reliable information if the appropriate tools and techniques are employed. Two existing instruments that allow a child to self-report on their bullying experiences include the Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children, Second Edition (March, n.d.) for assessing anxiety symptoms in children aged 8 to 19 years and the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale 2 Second Edition (Piers, Harris & Herzberg, n.d.) for identifying issues regarding self-concept in children aged 7 to 18 years.

From the research (see Crothers & Levinson, 2004; Durbin, 2010; Fivush & Baker-Ward, 2005; Orbach & Lamb, 2007; Pezdek and Hodge, 1999) there is evidence to suggest young children are able to reliably self-report on experiences such as bullying. This provides a reasonable rationale for developing a standardised interview aimed at identifying bully/victims via self-report among children aged 5 to 7 years.

Recent high profile school bullying cases reported by the media, such as the boy who fought back against his bully (Daily Mail, 2011), combined with research on the effects of bullying, make early intervention in this area an urgent need. There is currently no measure for bullying for 5- to 7-year-olds. The most common measure is the OBVQ but this is inappropriate for this age group, as it is a paper and pen test and aimed at children aged 8 to 16 years and younger children may not be able to read or follow instructions and questions. A screening tool for younger children to identify bully victims and, possibly in the future the bullies themselves, may prove very helpful for schools when implementing their anti-bullying policies. Likewise, a screening tool may also help discern whether children of this age are able to reliably self-report on their experiences. Chapter 2 highlights the literature in this field, and the gaps in current research, particularly in regard to the lack of a reliable measure that can identify young children who are being bullied at school.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Literature Search

A search of the literature was conducted using the PSYCInfo database and the advanced search tool from Google Scholar to search for articles relating to bullying and the types of bullying present in the 5 to 7 years age group. Search terms used included, 'bullying', 'young children', 'bullying AND primary school', 'effects of bullying', 'bullying assessment' and 'bullying measures'. To find existing measures of bullying which have not been published, the electronic version of the Mental Measurements Yearbook with Tests in Print was employed. Search terms such as 'bullying AND children' were used to search this database. Information on effective interviewing techniques for children of this age and their ability to self-report was also gathered. Search terms included, 'children AND emotions', and 'children AND self-report'. The involvement of parents and teachers in the study was also explored with search terms such as 'parent reports AND bullying', and 'teacher reports AND bullying'.

As bullying is often confused with teasing, 'teasing' was also used as a search term to acquire information regarding past researcher's criteria that aimed to distinguish between the two behaviours. Related research articles were also obtained from relevant articles reference lists. The literature search also focused on existing instruments for identifying bullying in children of all ages to determine the psychological constructs measured within the instrument. Studies were also analysed to determine how successful self-report instruments for children aged 5 to 7 years have been in the past.

Self-Report Measures

Existing Self-Report Assessment Measures: Older children

There are many instruments available for identifying and quantifying bullying across age and context. Several self-report instruments used for measuring bullying in children at school are described below.

The Social Experience Questionnaire self-report version (SEQ-S) developed by Crick and Grotpeter (1996) was designed to determine how often other students, aged 9 to 11 years, attempt to threaten their social relationships, and how often they threaten to harm their well-being, in addition to how often they experience positive attention from their peers. The instrument consists of 15 items, employs a 5 point Likert scale and is intended for school children aged 9 to 11 years (Searchable Inventory of Instruments, 2012). Crothers and Levinson (2004) suggested this instrument may be more useful with girls as it measures indirect forms of bullying, whereas other instruments tend to focus on physical bullying. As the questionnaire was designed for those aged 9 to 11 years, it may not be as relevant for this study as instruments which cover the younger age range.

Other instruments worth noting include the Bullying Behaviour Scale (BBS) by Austin and Joseph (1996) which aims to assess bullying problems in school children aged 8 to 11 years and consists of six forced-choice items regarding negative physical and verbal behaviours. Neary and Joseph (1994) developed a similar instrument; the Peer Victimisation Scale (PVS) which is aimed at identifying children aged 8 to 11 years who are bullied at school and contains six forced-choice items regarding both physical and verbal victimisation. Statistical analysis of the PVS found it was able to reliably identify those who were being bullied and had high consistency with self-report and peer measures (Austin & Joseph, 1996).

The most widely known measure is the Olweus Bully Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ) (1993). This questionnaire is aimed at determining the frequency and types of bullying

present in schools among children aged 8 to 16 years, and the context in which it takes place. For example, it helps to identify common places in the school where bullying occurs, who the offenders are and whether the victim or any bystanders intervene. Olweus (1993) also sought out information regarding children's reporting of bullying that occurs at school to their parents or teachers. He included a definition of bullying at the beginning of the questionnaire, with the intention of measuring a specific type of behaviour which he deemed to be bullying. From a review of the literature, Austin and Joseph (1996) found that the OBVQ is considered one of the best instruments for estimating prevalence of bullying with children at intermediate school age and older.

Embry (1995) developed the Name Calling Survey to determine how often children aged 5 to 12 years experience name-calling at school. This tool would be best used as part of a battery of tests, as it only covers one element of bullying behaviour typically present in schools. A similar measure is the Peer Nomination Inventory which was developed by Wiggins and Winder (1961) to allow children aged 5 to 18 years to identify children in their classroom who display particular bullying behaviours. The test contains 26 items, including seven relating to verbal and physical victimisation and seven which measure aggression. However, while both of these instruments can identify bullies and victims, they are not qualitative measures and therefore cannot gain information on children's specific experiences (Smith & Levan, 1995).

A common instrument used in New Zealand and Australia is Rigby and Slee's Peer Relations Questionnaire (PRQ) (1993), designed for students aged 5 to 18 years, which consists of 20 items and is a standardised measurement aimed at investigating students who bully others and those who are victimised. It also contains scales that measure prosocial behaviour and additional items that act as fillers. When administering to younger children, it is recommended the items be read out to them and also to allow questions to be asked

throughout the administration. Crothers and Levinson (2004) advice this measure, like other self-report measures, should be used in conjunction with peer, parent and/or teacher ratings. However, an examination of the psychometric properties of the PRQ conducted by Hulsey (2008), revealed that the instrument did not produce an acceptable level of reliability for five out of the eight sections, which included sections used to predict the prevalence of bullying and victimisation in the school. Hulsey (2008) suggested this unreliability may provide the schools which use the questionnaire to evaluate the effectiveness of bullying interventions, with a distorted view of the prevalence of bullying in their school. Hulsey (2008) concluded that the questionnaire is most effective with children in intermediate and high school, and that test re-test reliability with those tested in primary school did not reach the acceptable standard of 70%. Hulsey (2008) suggested that older children may have a better understanding of bullying and better comprehension and attention skills that assist them to focus during administration and to remember past events, whereas younger children may not yet have developed these skills and also may have difficulties recalling events within a specific time frame.

As many of the behaviours and consequences associated with bullying are internal, a naturalistic observation was not considered as a method of assessment (see Colvin et al., 1998; Skinner, Rhymer, & McDaniel, 2000). According to researchers such as Colvin et al., (1998), bullying is often covert and occurs out of sight of teachers or other adults, further adding to the support for using methods other than observation to identify bullying behaviours in schools.

From this review of the literature and existing measures it appears there is no existing suitable instrument for identifying victims of bullying in younger children.

Existing Measures: Parent and Teacher Report

Peer and teacher reports are also relatively common assessment tools for bullying. They are used either as a comparison or when the child is considered too young to report on past experiences themselves. Nomination tasks are an additional type of measure, and are employed as an identification tool especially for targeting interventions. They may be more useful in primary school settings where teachers have more interaction with their students, compared to secondary school when they may only see the children for an hour a day. Teachers and peers are asked to nominate classmates from the roster with certain characteristics such as 'fights', and 'gets picked on' (Espelage &Swearer, 2003). For example, Bowers, Smith, and Binney (as cited in Crothers &Levinson, 2004) used a picture sociometric method where participants were given a photograph of each child in their class and asked to separate them into two piles, one consisting of those who bully others and the other for those who do not bully others. The participants were then asked to use the same photographs to separate the children who get bullied and those who do not. While the students spend a lot of time together and may know each other relatively well, peer nominations from young children may not be reliable sources of information as they are not likely to have the cognitive or perceptual skills to report and distinguish between teasing and bullying (Ladd & Profilet, 1996). In this case, the legal and ethical issues regarding reporting children's names are a concern.

Another method is behavioural observations, structured or unstructured, conducted in the child's natural setting. There is conflicting research on this method; some believe that it is ideal for collecting data on the frequency of bullying and the role specific students play if involved. It has been suggested that social status, social isolation and social withdrawal can also be analysed. On the other hand, a lot of bullying research suggests that bullying is often covert and that teachers are often not present.

In the past, the assessment of children relied heavily on unstructured interviews with parents and teachers. From a study that compared reports of parents and children it was found that the two often report different problems (Lapouse & Monk, as cited in Busse & Beaver, 2000). Parents reported more behaviour problems or problems that affect them as parents while the children were more likely to report internalising problems such as those associated with anxiety and depression. From their study, Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005) found that children aged 9 to 11 years were more likely to tell their parents than their teacher if they were regularly bullied, however, 75% told at least one adult whether it was their parent or teacher or both. The children reported that teachers were more likely to intervene to stop bullying than parents. These studies highlight the importance of a multi-informant approach when investigating bullying in schools.

Teacher Reports. There are advantages and disadvantages for employing informant reports when assessing children, therefore teacher reports must be used alongside other methods of information gathering. Beran (2006) suggested that an advantage of administering a questionnaire to teachers about bullying in their classroom is that they can use their knowledge of individual children to make unbiased comparisons of their behaviour. Teachers can also be reliable sources of information for reporting on specific behaviours as they spend a lot of time with the children, particularly in the selected age range. However, research indicates that playgrounds are the most common place for bullying to occur, away from any adult supervision (see Colvin et al., 1998; Craig & Pepler, 1997; Farrington, 1993; Fekkes et al., 2005; Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara, & Kernic, 2005; Harris & Petrie, 2003; Olweus, 1993). Response biases may also be a problem and include the halo effect, where a child is rated based on their general characteristics rather than the particular behaviour being measured. Similar to this problem, severity and leniency, where the rater tends to consistently rate all the students either higher or lower on the scale compared to other teacher

reports, may be present. The opposite of the latter response bias are central tendency effects where raters consistently select midpoints on the scale (Merrell, 2000).

Teacher reports are often similar to peer nomination surveys in that they are given a list of their students' names and asked to identify those they believe are being bullied or those that bully others, or to identify students that exhibit certain behaviour characteristics (Crothers & Levinson, 2004). However, teachers' ratings will be based on their own experiences with students, and sampling bias may need to be taken into account as teachers often observe students in a limited number of settings and often not in the playground where bullying is most likely to occur (e.g., Craig & Pepler, 1997; Colvin et al., 1998; Crothers & Levinson, 2004; Farrington, 1993; Olweus, 1993; Glew et al., 2005; Harris & Petrie, 2003). However, this may be different for younger children as their teachers are more involved with the students and their parents. Crothers and Levinson (2004) suggest teacher reports be used in conjunction with other methods of identifying bullies and victims. Boulton (1997) suggests teacher's reporting of bullying requires more research as the attitudes of teachers towards bullying varies, and if they do not view behaviour as harmful they are less likely to act to prevent it or intervene.

Many teacher reports are based on identifying bullies rather than victims. For example, the Dodge and Coie's (1987) Aggressive Behavior Checklist (ABC) is a measure of children's aggressive behaviour and is designed for children aged 6 to 12 years old. The instrument is a self-report measure that employs a Likert scale, takes only 5 minutes to complete and is versatile in that it can also be administered to parents (SIS, 2012). The short administration time and the fact it is a self-report measure is appealing as it adds to the instrument's accessibility and ease of use. The School Social Behavior Scales (SSBS) (Merrell, 1993) was developed to assess social and antisocial behaviour in those aged 5 to 18 years and also examine the students' social competence. It can be used with the students'

teacher or therapist and takes 10 minutes to administer the 65 items (SIS, 2012). Like the ABC, the SSBS is focused on identifying bullies or those at risk of displaying aggressive behaviour. Ladd and Profilet's (1996) Child Behavior Scale (Ladd & Profilet, 1996) is aimed at identifying both bullies and victims and is another rating instrument consisting of 59 items which take around 20 minutes to administer. Constructs measured include exclusion, aggressiveness, and social behaviours with peers and an analysis of its psychometric properties revealed the instrument was able to produce reliable data, which makes it more relevant to this study than other measures.

Parent Reports. From a search of the literature and previous studies there appear to be limited instruments specific to parents rating their child's behaviour and social experiences at school. Anti-bullying policies have only recently taken on a Whole-School Approach. This approach emphasises the importance of including parents and the community as well as teachers, and has become a more preferred approach for managing bullying in schools. It is important to involve parents to keep communication between the school and families high, and also because research indicates that the family environment has an impact on a child's social skills and behaviour and school. For example, lack of rules and monitoring of children's activities while in their parents/caregivers care is a predictor for aggression, while over-protective parenting is linked to children who are bullied (Smith & Sharp, 1994).

The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) (Achenbach, 1991) is an instrument used for parents/caregivers to report on a child's strengths and problem behaviours. It can be administered as an interview or self-report and there is also a version for teachers called the Teacher Report Form. Relevant constructs measured in the CBCL to this study include bullying, conduct problems, social problems and aggression and cover two age ranges, one and half to five years and the other for 6 to 18 years. A downside to the instrument is that it is relatively long, taking 15 minutes to administer and consisting of 140 items for the

parent/teacher to check (SIS, 2012). It is also not focused specifically on bullying and therefore many items would prove irrelevant for this study.

Overview of self-report measures

Advantages of self-report measures. For those aged 8 years and over, the method of assessment most commonly used is the self-report measure. Espelage and Swearer (2003) stated that self-report is the most common and preferred method of assessment when gathering information about bullying in schools. The main advantages of a self-report measure as suggested by Crothers and Levinson (2004) is its capacity to be administered multiple times throughout the school year, in this case, to assess changes in bullying, the short administration time, and it's inexpensiveness.

Goodman, Meltzer and Bailey (1989) suggest several adjustments need to be made to existing measures to make them age appropriate for younger children, and to help ameliorate the impact of cognitive and intellectual capacity on a child's self-reporting. Grammatical changes need to be made, for example, changing the tense from third person to first person and adjusting the language so it is age appropriate.

Age appropriate self-report measures for young children have proven to be useful when focused on gaining insight into a child's physical and emotional wellbeing. For example, several studies have focused on children's ability to self-report pain with a variety of measures (see McGrath, 1990; Stinson, Kavanagh, Yamada, Gill & Stevens, 2006; Varni, Limbers & Burwinkle, 2007). McGrath (1990) found that children were able to reliably self-report on pain intensity if given an age appropriate interview which took approximately five minutes (cited in Varni et al., 2007). The wording and scales of an existing instrument for older participants was simplified, with a 3 point visual analogue scale for pain intensity (not at all a problem; sometimes a problem; a lot of a problem), with each response choice viewed in conjunction with a scale of happy to sad faces (cited in Varni et al., 2007). Von Baeyer

(2006) suggests that of the several different scales available for use with children to determine pain intensity, visual analogue scales (VAS) and faces scales are the most appropriate for children aged 5 to 7 years. However they advise that face scales are preferred over VAS when given a choice. This preference may be because there is less quantitative estimation required for faces scales. The faces scales are particularly useful when drawings are used (rather than photographs) as they do not necessarily depict a particular gender or ethnicity and therefore can be used with a wider demographic population.

McConaughy (2000) suggests that child interviews are advantageous when used in conjunction with other assessment tools for several reasons. Firstly, an interview allows the child to express their experiences of people and events in their own words. However, McConaughy (2000) notes that interviews should also be conducted with the child's parents and any other significant figures in the child's life so that a holistic perspective of the situation can be obtained and perspectives can be compared. These additional interviews are important even though research by Lapouse & Monk (as cited in Busse & Beaver, 2000) suggests that agreement between self-reports from children and reports from parents and others is low. Secondly, child interviews also allow the interviewer to observe how the child interacts one-on-one with an adult. Thirdly, interviews establish rapport and trust which are necessary for ongoing assessment and interventions. Lastly, interviews can also take on a variety of formats, from semi-structured to more structured interviews depending on the purpose of the interview.

Semi-structured interviews are a standard format that allows for certain flexibility in questioning and responding to an interviewee. McConaughy (2000) suggests that semi-structured formats are ideal for using as part of a behavioural assessment as antecedents and consequences of a particular problem can be investigated. A semi-structured interview typically provides the interviewer with a framework and specific questions, while still

allowing the interviewer to follow up on any responses as needed. An advantage of a semi-structured interview is in its flexibility.

Disadvantages of self-report measures. There are several disadvantages of using self-report measures to identify bullying in young children. Boulton (1994) suggested the sensitive and emotive nature of the subject itself may cause a variety of difficulties. There may be under or over reporting for a multitude of reasons, for example, many children are threatened by bullies not to tell an adult. Perry, Kusel, and Perry (as cited in Crothers & Levinson, 2004) suggested that self-report measures should not be used when a child's idea of themselves and their perceptions of others may be biased, as they may not be able to see themselves objectively and report on their behaviour and others' behaviour reliably.

Crothers and Levinson (2004) support McConaughy's (2000) findings suggesting that interviews be used as a secondary source of information in conjunction with quantitative measures as the primary source. As with self-report questionnaires there is the issue of validity. This is due to the nature of the responses and also to the preconceptions or viewpoints of the interviewer (Crothers & Levinson, 2004). Eckert, Dunn, Codding and Guiney (2000) indicate that self-report measures are important as they gain information on the individual's experience and their perceptions of different behaviours, but that these measures should be used alongside other sources such as informant reports from parents and teachers.

Lastly, a disadvantage of semi-structured interviews with children aged 5 to 7 years is that the interviewer needs to be trained in clinical interviewing, thus making the instrument less accessible to many.

Overview of techniques for reporting incidences

Research on forensic interviews with children indicates that children need to be interviewed as soon as possible after a traumatic incidence. It is recommended that interviewers introduce themselves first and inform the child about the interviewer's role and the purpose of the interview, in addition to ground rules such as advising the child to speak up if there is something they do not understand, or if the interviewer got something wrong (Lamb et al., 2007). Open-ended prompts should be the primary method of eliciting information, especially during the initial stages of the interview, and the use of recognition prompts such as 'did they touch you' be limited (Lamb et al., 2007). Information elicited with the use of open ended questions is more likely to be accurate than information elicited from focused recognition prompts. It is suggested that open ended questions force the information to be recalled from memory, whereas information gained from using focused prompts or closed questions involve the child to recognise the prompts given (Lamb et al., 2007). Focused prompts or closed questions can lead children to answer questions affirmatively even when the events never occurred; the risk of which is higher in children aged 6 years and under (Lamb et al., 2007; Lamb et al., 2003). While the capacity and strategies which young children employ to retrieve memories are less than those employed by older children, Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin, Stewart and Mitchell (2003) indicate that when an interviewer employs open-ended questions and free recall prompts, children as young as 4 years are able to provide basic yet important information regarding alleged experiences of abuse.

Lamb, Orbach, Hershkowitz, Esplin, and Horowitz (2007) have made several suggestions that need to be taken into consideration when developing assessments that focus on eliciting information from young children about events they have experienced personally. These included breaking events into small segments, and using action-based cues such as 'Tell me

about the hitting' rather than cues focusing on objects or people. Using time as a cue was not found to be effective in interviewing children until they were at least 8 years old. This suggests young children have not yet grasped the concept of time (Orbach & Lamb, 2007).

Most children aged 5 to 7 years cannot read a self-report measure. Children aged 5 to 7 years need to report verbally, or through dramatic action, or pictorially. For example, with drawings or by being shown pictures (Clark and Moss, as cited in Crivello et al., 2008). Visual strategies such as using photographs or drawing may also engage the child, as will making the task a more collaborative exercise. These actions sustain their attention for longer than if the task was solely paper and pencil questionnaire or interview. A study that employed alternative methods of interviewing is Hill, Layboum and Borland's (1996, cited Crivello et al., 2008) study with children aged 5 to 12 years. They focused on children's understanding of their wellbeing, and included in their focus group discussions various techniques such as visual prompts, drawings, individual interviews and picture stories.

Colvin, Tobin, Beard, Hagan, and Sprague (1998) reviewed a series of assessment tools on bullying and found that most asked questionnaires aimed at who was being bullied, the frequency of the bullying and where it happened within the school. They suggested the best indicator of prevalence is surveys rather than observation as bullying is often covert and often occurs out of sight of teachers. In terms of interviews, Crothers and Levinson (2004) suggested that if the interviews are conducted by someone outside the school then the child may be more likely to reveal sensitive information. They suggested that interviews be used as a secondary source of information in conjunction with quantitative measures as the primary source. As with self-report questionnaires, there is the issue of validity and this is due to the nature of the responses and also to the preconceptions or viewpoints of the interviewer. Mauthner (1997) suggests that children 6 years and under should not be interviewed alone as they tend to remain silent or provide monosyllabic answers. She

suggests interviewing children in a focus group as this helps children feel more comfortable as they are used to discussions in peer groups from being at school. However, this may not be the case when interviewing children this young about bullying. Due to the nature of the questions, children may be less likely to report bullying, especially if the offender is present for the focus group.

Previous Studies with Young Children Reporting Bullying Experiences

Smith and Levan (1995) found children's beliefs around what bullying is are quite different and change from age five to adulthood. The authors conducted a study with 60 children (30 boys and 30 girls) aged 6 to 7 years old to examine how reliably children of this age can understand and report bullying. Participants were randomly selected from two schools located in a predominantly middle-class area. One of the interviewers familiarised themselves with the students prior to administration of the interview by sitting in class as a helper for three afternoons. This was designed to help build rapport with the children. As part of the study Smith and Levan (1995) developed a pictorial questionnaire based loosely on the OBVQ, but suitable for administration with 6- to 7-year-olds. Following two pilot studies alterations were made to the questionnaire in terms of its structure and language. The final version, which took 15 to 20 minutes to administer, consisted of 20 questions, employed a multiple choice format and used pictures of happy/sad faces for the children to select. Items included, 'at playtime do you play with - a lot of people/a few people/ no one' with a stick figure drawing for each possible response. Other items asked the children to identify bullying in 10 different scenarios; about the frequency of any bullying; and whether they told their teacher if they were being bullied. Three items at the beginning of the questionnaire were included to gain general information and the final three items were included to end the interview positively with items such as 'What is your favourite thing about school'. These

items were not included in data analysis. The participants were either read the questions or if they wanted, read them themselves, with the interviewer recording their answers. The results suggests that the majority (87%) of children could define bullying with a typical answer being, "you get hurt, they kick you and call you names" (pp. 495). However, the study was conducted with a small sample size, only 60 children, from two middle-class schools in Sheffield, England. As a result, these findings are difficult to generalise and future research would benefit from a study with participants from a wider range of backgrounds. The researchers suggested that a 15 to 20 minute administration time was satisfactory but would be better if shortened. However, they also found that including the 'smiley' faces helped keep the children focused and on task. Smith and Levan (1995) found research in this area lacking and therefore were not able to make comparisons to validate their data; however, they were able to confirm several points including the theory that there are generally one or two bullies present in each classroom. The results from Smith and Levan's (1995) study are supported by results from Ziegler and Rosenstein-Manner's (1991, cited in Farrington, 1993) study with primary school children who were found to understand bullying in terms of physical aggression, verbal forms such as name-calling and threats, and also exclusion. Their findings suggest the majority of children involved in the study liked playtime (80%), and when asked to identify what they thought bullying was, direct physical examples were mentioned the most (70%) over direct verbal examples such as name-calling (45%), or indirect examples such as exclusion (15%). Over 80% of children reported they told a teacher if they had been bullied, a percentage which has found to decrease with age. They also found that those who reported being bullied today also said they had been bullied this week, suggesting they had an understanding of temporal concepts. However, the children's responses could not be checked for validity as a multi-informant method was not employed. The items were also not able to determine whether children thought repetition, imbalance of

power and intention to hurt them were factors that needed to be present for behaviour to be considered bullying and there were concerns raised in regards to children including one-off incidences of fighting as bullying.

Another study conducted more recently by Vallaincourt et al. (2008) investigated children's understanding of bullying, specifically whether their understanding matched researcher's ideas around bullying. Their study consisted of 334 children aged 8 to 18 years from a range of primary and secondary schools in Ontario, Canada. The children were randomly divided into two groups. The first group was provided with a definition that included a variety of bullying behaviours in addition to the three criteria mentioned previously (power imbalance, repetition, intentionality). The second group was asked to write what they thought bullying was, and then both groups answered modified items from the OBVQ on the frequency at which they were bullied or bullied others. Power imbalance (26%) was mentioned slightly more often than intentionality and repetition (1.7%, and 6% respectively). However, the majority of younger students in the second group emphasised general harassment behaviours (46.6%), physical and aggression (24.3%) and verbal aggression (15.8%), but lacked the insight and experience to recognise other behaviours as bullying. The presence versus absence of a definition on reporting bullying experiences did not appear to have an effect amongst girls but had a marginal effect among boys, as 59% of boys provided with a definition reported bullying while only 41% of those not provided with a definition reported bullying. The research needs to be extended to determine whether these results are due to under-reporting or over-reporting. It is also important to note that this study and its results cannot be generalised to the younger age group.

The aim of Perren and Alsaker's (2006) study, conducted in Switzerland with 334 children aged 5 to 7 years from 18 kindergartens, was to determine whether teachers and children's nominations of victims, bullies, and bully/victims were similar. Teachers were asked to

complete a questionnaire designed by the researchers for each child with items relating to social behaviour and bullying by rating each child on four victimisation and four bullying items (physical, verbal, object-related and exclusion). Similar to Smith and Levan's (1995) study, prior to interviewing and administering the peer nomination task with the children, the interviewer familiarised themselves with them to the kindergartens by visiting and having a discussion with the children about people interviewing children with role-plays at the end. Each interview included providing the child with pictorial definitions of bullying and then completing a peer nomination task where pictures of different forms of bullying were used and children assigned them to pictures of children in their class who were victims of bullying or bullied others. Results from the children and teachers' nominations were similar in identifying bullies (r=.233), but there was only a weak association for identifying victims (r=.076). This research provided some evidence that children and adults may have different understandings of peer victimisation and bullying. The data Perren and Alsaker (2006) gathered from their study is valuable for research of bullying in very young children especially as they used a multi-informant approach. This could have been further extended into a longitudinal study to determine whether there are predictors of bullying evident in kindergarten children.

Rationale

At present, while there are screening tools available for identifying bullying in children aged 8 years and up such as the questionnaire Reynolds Bully Victimization Scale for Schools, there is not a similar reliable, instrument available for children aged 5 to 7 years. While the PRQ for primary school students covers this age range, the findings from analyses suggest it is not a reliable instrument, particularly in measuring victimisation. The development of a new tool may prove useful in primary schools for identifying more covert

forms of bullying such as exclusion. Most bullying is not apparent to teachers. The identification of victims of bullying at this age is important as there is evidence to suggest that those bullied in primary school will continue to be bullied in intermediate and secondary school (Harachi et al., 2006; Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1984; Olweus, 1993). Therefore, identification of those being bullied may allow schools to implement additional anti-bullying strategies and interventions to create a safer environment; both physically and emotionally for their students. To develop an interview aimed at identifying bullying in young children, it first must be determined whether young children are able to reliably self-report on their experiences of bullying.

Research Aims

The first aim of this study was to investigate whether children aged 5 to 7 years were able to reliably self-report their unpleasant social experiences. If they can, then a self-report screening interview could be developed. This would be aimed at identifying victims of bullying in this age group.

If children were shown to be able to self-report, the second aim of this project was to develop items for an interviewer-assisted, semi-structured self-report interview for identifying bully victims among 5 to 7-year-old school children, with a view to being developed at a later stage into a screening instrument.

Research Questions

1. Can young children reliably report on their own experiences of bullying,
2. And if so, can a self-report interview be developed to reliably identify bully victims in children aged 5 to 7 years?

CHAPTER III

Method

Ethics

The University of Canterbury's Educational Research Human Ethics Committee approved the study and the plan for recruitment and informed consent (Appendix A). Approval was first gained from each school's Principal, who then discussed the study with teachers of Years 1 and 2 classes to gain their consent. Information and consent forms, detailing the purpose and procedure of the study, were sent home with each child chosen to participate in the study and returned to their classroom teachers who then passed them onto the Principal. Times were then arranged between the researcher and Principals to conduct the Pilot Study and Main Study.

Research Design

The present study was carried out in three phases. The first phase consisted of developing the questions for an interview on bullying from the research and past measures. The second phase consisted of the piloting of these questions individually with six children aged 6 to 7 years and then discussed with the same children as a group. The third stage consisted of a pilot (Main Study) of the questions developed from the first and second phases.

Instrument Format

The research indicates that the most ethical measure of children's bullying experiences is individual self-report (Farrell, 1999). As pencil and paper and computer formats require a certain level of reading ability an interview format (Smith & Levan, 1995) is the only feasible

method for obtaining self-reported accounts of bullying among children of this age. Therefore, interviewer-assisted self-report interview was the chosen method for this study.

The number of points used for the response scale was decided on from research on similar questionnaires (Rigby & Slee, 1993). A 4-point scale was decided on to decrease the likelihood of confusion for the children as research indicates they may have difficulty distinguishing between too many options (e.g., Rigby & Slee, 1993; Cheng et al., 2011).

To increase accessibility and the practical elements of the interview, the interview was designed to be administered by teachers, who would not require any training to administer or score the interview.

Phase I: Development of the Instrument Content

A combination of inductive and deductive procedures was used to develop the content for the interview. A deductive approach was employed to identify any suitable items from existing measures such as the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 1993) or the Reynolds Bully Victimization Scale for Schools (Reynolds, n.d.). The structure of the interview, which was named the Unpleasant Social Experiences Questionnaire (USEQ), was based on the Peer Relations Questionnaire (PRQ) (Slee & Rigby, 1993). The items included in the PRQ served as a guide for those measured in the USEQ. Items from existing measures were then adapted to employ age appropriate language for the target audience. Information was gathered on the types of bullying prevalent in this age group from a variety of sources (e.g., Valliancourt et al., 2008; Carroll-Lind & Kearney, 2004; Cheng, Chen, Liu & Chen, 2011). The idea to use images to illustrate the questions regarding specific behaviours was based on Smith et al's (2002) study of school bullying where they developed 25 stick figures.

An inductive approach was then employed in the form of a discussion group of six children aged 6 to 7 years to gather information on bullying as a construct and to test the validity and utility of the items gathered from existing measures.

1. A literature review was conducted.
2. Questions developed from existing measures and research were administered in an interview to six 5 to 7-year-olds.
3. A discussion group was then conducted with these children to generate ideas around their conceptualisation of bullying and utility of items gathered from existing measures.
4. A Pilot Study was conducted with the questions selected from Phase I with 40 5 to 7 year-old children. .

The discussion group was chosen as a method of selecting the questions for the Main Study as it was a useful way of exploring a topic in an informal manner. Bogdan and Biklem (2007) suggest discussion groups also allow for a range of views to be discussed that may not occur in individual interviews.

Development Process of Instrument Content

The development of questions for Phase II consisted of three parts which are detailed below.

Part 1. From the process described above, 19 questions were developed for the Phase II interview with six children (Appendix B). The interview began with several questions aimed at collecting identifying information from the children such as their age, gender and the age and gender of any siblings. Basic questions regarding the children's general opinions and feelings regarding school, their activities during break times and in the classroom were then asked. These included, 'Things I like about school are' and 'Tell me about what you do at

lunchtime'. Using emotion cards, the children were then asked how they felt during break times. These questions were asked to build rapport and also help to increase reliability and validity, in that, if a child was unable to answer these questions they would be unlikely to produce reliable responses for the remaining questions.

Part 2. Eight questions focusing on specific types of bullying experiences were asked, with selected questions accompanied by a pictorial illustration of the experience. These questions followed the same structure. For example, the child was asked 'Do other kids ever pick on you' followed by a 4 point Likert scale to determine the frequency of the behaviour (Everyday, Once a week, Once or twice a month, Never), they were then asked to elaborate and discuss what happened when they were picked on and how they felt.

Part 3. Pictorial representations of some of the questions (see Appendix C) were developed on the basis of previous research (Perren & Alsaker, 2006; Smith et al., 2002) to increase the child's understanding of the question and to increase engagement. Only questions where a clear picture could be created to represent the situation were chosen to have an accompanying picture and the same characters for the emotion cards were employed. One Hundred Feeling Faces (Reaction Packed, n.d.) cards, made up of a set of cards with pictorial representations of different emotions were selected to gather information regarding the emotions children were most likely to use to describe their feelings. These represented, 'sad', 'shy', and 'excited', 'happy', 'worried', 'unhappy', 'lonely', and 'scared'. The two final questions were 'Do you ever tell anyone if other kids are mean to you?' and 'Do kids do any other things to you that you don't like?'.

Phase II – Pilot Study

Pilot Study Recruitment

Recruitment was made through a colleague who had discussed the study with her Principal. The Principal distributed an information pack to students in the specified age range (6-7 year olds) which included information and consent forms for the parent/caregiver and a separate form for the parent/caregiver to read to their child. Participants were accepted until the first six students had returned their consent forms. Six students were judged to be an acceptable and manageable number for the discussion group part of the study.

School Characteristics

The school involved in Phase II was located in Christchurch and catered for students from Years 1 to 6. The school had a low decile rating, a rating which is based on the socioeconomic status of the community surrounding the school. The school had 47 students, 10 of which were in Years 2 and 3 where the participants were recruited from.

Participants

Participants in the discussion group included six students aged 6 to 7 years. All of the participants came from the same classroom, which contained a mixture Year 2 and 3 students, and all had been at the school for more than six months. Four participants were male and two were female. Half of the children were 6 years old and the other 7 years old, with five of the children having siblings all of whom were younger than themselves.

Setting

Administration for Phase II was conducted over one morning at the school. As arranged by the classroom teacher, each child was interviewed individually in a resource room in the library. At the end of each interview the child was given a slip of paper with the name of the next child to be interviewed and asked to bring them back to the room.

Measures

Each child was administered the 19 questions developed as explained previously.

Procedure

Administration of the interviews was undertaken by the researcher, a 5th year Child and Family Psychology student with previous training in child interview methods.

The following procedures were used:

1. Each interview began with obtaining verbal consent from the child and advising them of the 'ground rules' of the interview and checking their understanding of these. These included the child advising the interviewer if there was anything they did not understand, did not know or did not want to answer.
2. Each child was asked several questions to screen for their knowledge of selected emotions. For example, "what does happy mean?".
3. Once it was clear the child understood the process and was able to identify the emotions, the interview began.
4. Each question was read out to the child by the interviewer.
5. The child responded and the interviewer wrote their responses word-for-word.
6. The next question was then administered.
7. This pattern continued until all 19 questions were answered.
8. Once the interview had been administered to each child, the participants were brought together in the library to discuss the interview.
9. The children's teacher was present to supervise the discussion.
10. Discussion within the group of each question was centered on the answers the children had given, anything they had not understood such as the wording of the questions, and their understanding of bullying and anything else that could be added to the interview.

11. The children were also asked if there were any other feelings that were not represented by the emotion cards and shown additional emotion cards to consider. These included: 'good', 'fantastic', 'brave', 'wonderful', 'afraid', 'frightened', 'hurt', 'terrified', 'fearful', and 'upset'.
12. The children's responses from the discussion were summarised.
13. The children were taken back to class by the supervising classroom teacher.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis of the results from Phase II focused on the development of the questions and interview rather than the instrument's ability as a whole to screen for unpleasant social experiences. Firstly, an item analysis was conducted with the results from Phase II to determine the extent of each question's validity. Each question was analysed to determine frequency of responses to each question and to interpret the nature of their responses. Questions were modified where necessary and the final questions for the Main Study were selected.

Selection of Questions for Phase III - Main Study

Analysis focused on the frequency of responses to each question, frequency of emotions used by each participant and comments from the discussion group. Results from this stage produced revisions to three questions and additions to a further 10 questions.

Phase III – Main Study

Design

The Main Study was conducted to test the questions developed from Phase 1 and the parent and teacher comparison measures. Unfortunately, the parents and teachers did not complete the questionnaires within the researcher's time limits. Subject to ethical approval, the data that was gathered could be analysed in the future and is not reported in this thesis.

Development of Interview Questions for Phase III

Child Unpleasant Social Experiences Questionnaire (USEQ-C). The second phase of the study produced alternatives to one question and a space to record participants' emotions about particular situations for 10 questions. Further details and analysis of findings from the second stage are provided in the results section.

The final version of the USEQ (see Appendix D) developed for the Main Study consisted of 19 core questions with 13 questions, eight of which had three sub questions, aimed at gathering more detailed information. The first nine questions were included in the interview to build rapport and also to give the interviewee a chance to spontaneously discuss any unpleasant experiences at school. These questions were also employed to increase reliability and validity, with the theory that if the child could answer those questions they would be able to respond reliably to the remaining questions in the interview.

Parent Unpleasant Social Experiences Questionnaire (USEQ-P). A parent questionnaire (see Appendix E) was developed as a comparison measure to the children's interview, and to help determine whether the children had reported any bullying to their parents. Research indicates reporting becomes less common as children age but it is not clear at what age self-reporting begins to decline (Crothers & Levinson, 2004). The parent questionnaire consisted of five items. This was kept short so as to increase the likelihood of it being completed. Parents were asked to refer to their child's experiences over the last six months. The first two questions were included to determine whether generally their child likes going to school. The following questions were related to bullying experiences. For example, the fifth item, 'My child reports unpleasant experiences with their peers at school' asked the parents to answer on a 4-point scale ranging from 'everyday', 'once a week', 'once or twice a month', to 'never'. 'My child has one or more special friends at school' was included as research indicates friends can act as a barrier to bullying (Hodges & Perry, 1999). The final question

allowed the participants to discuss anything further they would like to add about their child's experiences at school.

Teacher Unpleasant Social Experiences Questionnaire (USEQ-T). The teacher questionnaire was developed as a comparison measure and to determine the reliability of the child interview (see Appendix F). Perren and Alsaker (2006) focused on identifying children involved in bullying through interviews and also employed teacher questionnaires in their assessment procedure. Similar to the parent version, it consisted of five items and was kept short and focused on how the teacher defines bullying and whether they can identify any children in the class who have been bullied in the past month. It also aims to get an overall representation of how children in each classroom interact. Some items included, 'Tell me about how the children in your classroom play' and 'Tell me about the unpleasant social exchanges that happen in your classroom'.

Emotion cards and picture cards. The Reaction Packed cards were useful in determining how the children felt after any unpleasant bullying experiences and were therefore retained. However, as angry was not an emotion represented in the set, a new set of cards was developed and based on the 100 Feeling Faces (Reaction Packed, n.d.) cards. The final cards (see Appendix G) represented five emotions. These included being 'excited', 'happy', and 'sad', 'angry', and 'scared'. In addition, the picture cards (see Appendix C) developed from Phase II for Questions 7, 11, 12, 14, and 15 to 17 were employed to increase participant engagement and were based on those developed by Smith et al. (2002).

Recruitment and Participants

Contact was made with the Deputy Principal of a primary school located in Christchurch. Consent was obtained from the Board of Trustees and Principal to conduct the Pilot Study with 40 of their students. Data collection occurred in the fourth term of the school year. The Deputy Principal assisted to randomly recruit participants from the school roll until 40

students had returned consent forms signed by their parents. All 40 students were aged 5 to 7 years, and their parents had read the information sheet to their child and had provided informed consent prior to the administration of the interview.

School characteristics

The primary school employed for the Main Study had 585 students on the school roll at the time of administration, of which 246 students were aged 5 to 7 years. The school had a high decile rating suggesting the surrounding community were of a higher socioeconomic status. The children were drawn from 13 classrooms of children from Years 1 to 3.

Participants

Forty students, 23 males and 17 females, were recruited. Of the children involved, 10 were 5 years old, 12 were 6 years, and 17 were aged 7 years. All of the children had siblings ranging from newborns to one who had an 18 year old brother.

Procedure

The procedure consisted of the following steps:

1. Each child was interviewed individually in a resource room in a building that also contained the staffroom.
2. Each individual interview began with the interviewer asking the child if they remembered their parents reading the information sheet to them.
3. The interview procedure was then explained to the child. The child was advised of the 'ground rules' of the interview and their understandings of these were checked. The ground rules included advising the interviewer if there was anything they did not understand, did not know or did not want to answer.
4. Once it was clear the child understood the process, verbal consent was obtained, and then the interview began.

5. The child was shown the emotion cards one at a time and asked to say what each feeling was and a time when they felt that way. This checked their understanding of the emotion displayed. If they could not provide an answer, the child was prompted. For example, when asked what 'excited' meant the interviewer asked how they felt about Christmas (as the interviews were held in December).
6. Each of the 19 questions was read out individually to the child by the interviewer. The child was allowed to stop the interviewer at any time if they did not understand the question. Once all 19 questions had been read out, the interviewer brought the child back to the present by asking questions about the rest of the child's day.
7. At the end of each interview the child was given a slip of paper with the name of the next child to be interviewed and asked to bring them back to the room. If the next child was in a different classroom, the interviewer collected the child and brought them back to the resource room for interviewing.
8. Copies of the USEQ-T were given to the Deputy Principal who distributed them to teacher's whose students were involved in the study. Completed questionnaires were collected from the school.
9. Parent questionnaires were administered via phone calls. Due to time constraints only 19 of the forty parents were contacted.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis for Phase III began with an item analysis to determine the extent of each question's validity on the interview. Each question was analysed to determine how many children provided a response and to interpret the nature of their responses. Corrected item-total correlations were calculated to determine the relationship between each question and the total score for each child. A principal components factor analysis was carried out with Stata 14 to determine whether any of the questions would form into separate factors

(Pallant, 2011). A question was considered to contribute to a factor if it had a loading of 0.30 or above (Aron et al., 2006). Cronbach's alpha was then calculated to determine the internal consistency of the interview. A qualitative analysis was carried out to investigate the participants' responses to the open-ended questions.

CHAPTER IV

Results: Phase II – Pilot Study

Qualitative Focus Group Interview Results

Phase II consisted of piloting the initial 19 questions (see Appendix B) with six children followed by a discussion of each question with the same children in a group setting.

Administration of the USEQ ranged from 10 to 20 minutes per child. This time is similar to administration times of other child questionnaires, including the Child Behavior Scale (Ladd & Profilet, 1996) and the School Social Behavior Scales (Merrell, 1993). The discussion with the group lasted for 15 minutes.

Five of the six children had no difficulty answering the 19 questions. For example, one 7-year-old boy said he liked coming to school because he could "see all his friends", and that if other children call him names he tells a teacher. One 6 year old girl responded with, "Don't know", to Question 2 and both parts of Question 8. She also did not know if children said 'mean things about her to others' but it was not clear if this was due to not understanding the question or whether she just did not know the answer. Her teacher stated that this type of response was common for this particular child.

Findings from the Six Children Relating to the Emotion Cards

Findings from the administration of Phase II questions suggested 'angry' should be added to the emotion cards as this was mentioned when asked at the individual interviews four times by three of the children, (two boys and one girl). In addition, when asked during the discussion group whether there were any other emotions they felt at school and three children stated "angry". From the discussion group it was established that 'worried' and 'unhappy' had quite similar meanings for most of the children. Both of these emotions were reported

minimally so were not retained for Phase III. All of the children knew what "happy" and "sad" meant.

Table 1
Frequency of emotions used by the children during Phase II administration.

Emotions	Frequency	Number of children
Sad	16	6
Happy	9	4 (boys)
Excited	5	3 (2 boys, 1 girl)
Lonely	5	2 (boys)
Angry	4	3 (2 boys, 1 girl)
Scared	4	2 (boys)
Worried	4	2 (boys)
Shy	3	3 (2 boys, 1 girl)
Unhappy	2	1 (boy)

N=6 children.

During administration of the interview and emotion cards to the children it became clear that the children sometimes did not understand what some of the emotions signified. It is important to note that while the participants could show on their faces what the feelings looked like, it was sometimes unclear whether the child understood the meaning attached to them. For example, Child #4 (7, male) answered that he worries when his "teacher checks his lunchbox", but could not expand on why this worried him. However, the majority of children responded with feelings appropriate to situations. For example, Child #6 (6, female) reported when asked how she feels at lunchtimes that she feels "lonely if I have to eat lunch by myself", and "shy if people are bigger than me".

Changes from Phase II to Phase III

Selection of emotions. The frequency with which the six children used each emotion was recorded (see Table 1), and as a result, five emotions were selected for use in the Main Study. These included: 'sad', 'angry', 'scared', 'happy', and 'excited' and were decided upon based on research gathered from the literature and from the findings of the discussion group.

Several questions were changed from Phase II (Pilot Study) to Phase III (Main Study) as some of the children did not respond to the questions as intended by the researcher. For example, Question Two, 'What do you like about school', was altered to 'What do you like about going to school', as the children's answers tended to reflect physical aspects of the school or the school's philosophy. This response reflects the values the school encourages in its students rather than answers relating to school activities.

Questions 4 and 5, in regards to break time and lunchtime, were changed from 'How do you feel?' to 'How does it make you feel?'. These modifications appeared to be more age appropriate and less threatening to the children. To determine whether the children enjoyed playing alone or in groups or both, had implications for interpreting this question. This sub-question was also added to Questions 8 to 17 to provide a space to record responses elicited from the emotion cards and to clarify the impact of any bullying that might be occurring. Following Questions 10 to 17 a 4-point scale was included to determine frequency ('Everyday', 'Once a week', 'Once or twice a month', 'Never'), then 'Tell me what happens' and finally 'How does it make you feel?' alongside emotion cards. These three sub-questions were also useful to determine whether the behaviour the children reported could be defined as bullying or as a one-off incident, for example, teasing or rough play during a soccer game and this appears to have worked. For example, one 5-year-old boy (Child #24) reported feeling "angry" when other children accused him of cheating at a game. When questioned further, the child reported that this had only happened once and would therefore not constitute bullying. Table 2 shows the final questions and sub-questions included in the USEQ for the Main Study.

Table 2: *Questions retained for Phase III Main Study*

Question Number	Question
1	Do you like coming to school
2	What do you like about going to school
3	Is there anything you don't like about school
4	Tell me about what you do at break time
	How does it make you feel
5	Tell me about what you do at lunchtime
	How does it make you feel
6	Where do you play at break times and lunchtime
7	Who do you play with
	How does it make you feel
8	What do you like best when you're in the classroom
	How does it make you feel
9	Is there anything you don't like about being in the classroom
	How does it make you feel
10	Do other kids ever pick on you
11	Do other kids ever not let you play with them
12	Do other kids ever make mean faces at you
13	Do other kids ever call you names you don't like
14	Do other kids ever say mean things about you to other kids
15	Do other kids ever take your things and don't give them back
16	Do other kids ever hit or punch you
17	Do other kids ever kick you
18	Do you ever tell anyone if other kids are mean to you
19	Do kids do any other things to you that you don't like

CHAPTER V

Results: Phase III Main Study

Forty children participated in the Main Study. Data for 2 of the 40 children were excluded from the data analysis due to concerns of reliability. Child #11's (5 years, male) responses were excluded from the analysis as there appeared to be a language barrier which prevented him from answering reliably. For example, he responded "don't know" to 'Tell me about what you do at breaktime', and could not provide a response for how he felt when playing at lunchtime. Child #32's (5 years, female) data was removed as her tone of voice and facial expressions suggested she did not understand the questions. This child answered "yes" to 7 out of 11 questions.

The following questions were analysed in a qualitative manner rather than using statistical analysis, as the focus for these questions was more on the child's ability to answer the questions appropriately rather than on the content itself. Question 1, 'Do you like coming to school?' was not included in the qualitative analysis as it was a closed question and was included in the statistical analyses. The qualitative results helped to begin to investigate whether children aged 5 to 7 years are able to reliably self-report on their experiences of bullying. The results of the quantitative analysis were predominantly used to determine whether the self-report interview was able to identify victims of bullying.

Qualitative Analysis of Questions 2 to 9 Not Scored

Question 2: 'What do you like about going to school?'. The majority of responses (83%) from the 10 five year old children included a comment about being able to see friends or play in the playground. Eighteen of the 38 children stated they enjoyed academic activities

including reading and poetry. Other responses included "playing with friends and getting new friends", and "every day my mum lets me go to school".

Responses from the 12 six year olds differed from the five year olds as only 33% of responses were related to social activities. Child #13 (male) did not know and the remaining children's responses reflected academic activities such as story writing, news time and learning as the things they liked about coming to school.

The 17 children aged 7 years provided a variety of responses, with ten of these children including a statement referring to positive social activities. Answers included "people are nice", "get to learn stuff" and, "heaps of fun activities". Similar to the other age groups responses regarding schoolwork were common, including four children saying they enjoyed learning new things.

This question was useful as it built rapport with the participants.

Question 3: 'Is there anything you don't like about school?'. Among the five year olds the majority of responses (75%) to this question was "no". Child #21 (female) said she did not like story writing and Child #31 (male) responded with "exploding toy", suggesting they did not understand the question. Child #1 (female) said "when I first started school", but did not go into any detail when prompted.

Similar to the five year olds, the majority of children (58%) aged six years said there was not anything they do not like about school. Examples of responses included, "playtime is too short", "when I'm told off" and "getting hurt", in addition to one child saying they did not know.

Of the 17 seven year olds, seven (44%) said there was not anything they did not like about school, and one did not know. Academic responses were common, with six children giving answers such as "too much work", and "listening to the teacher", "I would like to run around and do what I want". Child #37 (male) said "when people bully me" but did not expand on

this when prompted. There was not any evidence to suggest that this child was being bullied from his responses to other questions. He said that "sometimes other children do not let him play with them" but also that he "does not mind".

This question did not prove very useful as the majority of children could not think of anything they did not like about school and those that did, commented on academic tasks such as handwriting and story writing.

Question 4: 'Tell me about what you do at break time', and 'How does it make you feel?'. Of the five year olds who were able to answer this question (10 of 12) reported playing in various areas of the playground and all felt happy doing so. Child #2 (female) remarked she feels sad if other children are mean to her.

Playing in the playground and being involved in different sports games were the most common responses among six year olds, with 10 of the 12 children stating they were happy when doing so. Of the remaining two, one said when she plays with her friends she feels sad when "they growl at her for doing nothing", and another girl said she feels angry as break time "is not long enough".

The majority of the seven year olds responded that they play a variety of different activities in the playground including handball, monkey bars and skipping, and were happy when they played these games (81%). Three children said they played with friends but responded with emotions other than happy. These included Child #25 (male) said he sometimes feels scared if the friends he is playing handball with are bigger and "scared if he will win or not". Child #34 (female) said she usually feels "really happy" but also "sad because sometimes they're a bit mean". "They" being a particular group of girls who she also mentioned later in the interview as they sometimes leave her out of games. Child #7 (female) said she feels, "sad, happy, angry" and later said that she also gets excluded by the same group of girls as Child #34. She did not expand on what this group of girls exclude her from.

Question 5: 'Tell me about what you do at lunchtime,' and 'How does it make you feel?'. All of the five year olds who answered this question (11 of 12) reported feeling "good" or "happy" during lunchtime and talked about activities such as playing on the playground and playing scooter tag. Child #32 (female) could not remember what she normally did at lunchtime.

The six year olds all reported feeling "happy", "excited" and "good" at lunchtime and the activities they mentioned included playing tag, rugby, and playing in the sandpit. Child #38 (female) who said some of the girls had made her sad, further reported that she had talked to the girls about how their behaviour makes her feel, and now they have stopped being mean to her.

While all of the seven year olds reported feeling "happy" or "excited" during lunchtime while participating in activities such as playing soccer or talking to their friends, 3 of the 17 seven year olds also mentioned other feelings. Other feelings included feeling sad or scared; however these children could not explain exactly why they felt this way. Child #18 (female) said she felt strange when playing on the field because "people can't see me".

These two questions were useful as they helped the interviewer gain insight into the child's daily activities. However, they could be combined as most children's responses to Question 5 were similar to those given for Question 4.

Question 6: 'Where do you play at break times and lunchtime?'. Responses from the five year olds ranged "everywhere"' to the tennis court and outside the classroom, with the most common response (50%) being the playground.

The six and seven year olds provided more detailed responses, with the majority reporting the playground or other places outdoors. Several children said they played just outside the classroom and one said they sometimes went to the library.

This question did not prove very useful as most children answered this question within their responses to Question's 4 and 5.

Question 7: 'Who do you play with?' and 'How does it make you feel?'. Playing in a group was the most common response for five year olds (67%) with all of these children reporting feeling "happy", "good", or "excited". Four children reported playing sometimes by themselves and sometimes in a group and were all happy with both scenarios except for Child #24 (male) who reported feeling "angry because no one wanted to play with me". He did not mention being excluded again throughout the rest of the questionnaire.

All of the six year olds reported playing in a group and feeling happy.

Most children in the older age group reported playing in a group at lunchtime (75%) and felt "happy", "good" or "excited". Child #5 (male) reported playing in a group was "easier than playing by myself", and Child #25 (male) said he felt happy because he was "not wandering around school with no one". Of the four who reported playing sometimes by themselves and sometimes in a group, three said they felt "happy" or "excited" when in a group with the other child (female) reporting she feels "annoyed because sometimes we fight". Child #18 (female) reported feeling 'happy' when playing by herself, and that "I talk to myself to make me feel more comfortable", and Child #36 (female) said she was "happy" if they had chosen to play alone but 'sad' if other children would not let her play. Two children, Child #27 (male) and Child #7 (female), reported feeling "sad" when she played alone.

This question was useful to compare to questions later on in the interview especially Question 11, which focuses on exclusion. This question helped determine whether the child played alone, by choice, or due to social exclusion.

Question 8: 'What do you like best when you're in the classroom?' and 'How does it make you feel?'. Two seven year old girls (Child #18 and Child #36) reported not knowing what

they like best in the classroom. Other responses from all age groups included academic activities such as "reading" (24%), "maths" (10%), and "story writing" (10%). While other children reported liking craft activities, and playing games. None of the children mentioned any problems with other children in their class.

Question 9: 'Is there anything you don't like about being in the classroom?' and 'How does it make you feel?'. Seven of the five year olds said there was not anything they did not like about being in the classroom. Child #31 (male) said people tried to push him over when he first started school and that he felt "excited when they ran away". Child #16 (male) said he felt "sad" when people knocked down buildings he was working on which also made him feel "angry".

Half of the six year olds did not have anything to report, and two did not know. Child #23 (male) said he did not like reading some books and this made him "angry" while maths made Child #19 "bored". Child #8 (male) said he felt "sad when separated if he had been noisy during reading time", and Child #38 (female) reported feeling "angry" when other children annoy her or when "the teacher growls at her".

Half of the seven year olds also did not have anything to report. The other half reported feeling "bored", "angry" and "sad", for a variety of reasons including when other children are annoying them, following teacher's instructions and writing and maths.

From these findings, Questions 8 and 9 should be reworded to focus more on the social aspects of being in the classroom, as the responses were not helpful in determining whether bullying was occurring in the classroom.

Statistical Analysis of Scored Questions (Questions #1 & 10 to 19)

Ideally responses from children, their parents and teachers would have been compared as a means of measuring the level of agreement between the three sources. Due to time

constraints, the analysis of the parent questionnaires and the time delays of receiving the teacher questionnaires, these results were not analysed. However, they have been retained for future analysis.

To test the relationship between two variables and the strength and direction of this relationship, correlations were calculated (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2009). Corrected item-total correlations test for the correlation between each question and the total score, excluding the item in question. Cohen (1988, as cited in Aron, Aron, & Coups, 2006) states .1 is a small effect size, which suggests Questions 1, 14, and 18 (r=-.010, r=-.091, and r=-.087 respectively) were not measuring the same construct as the other questions (see Table 3). As a result these questions were removed from the next stage of analysis.

Table 3
Percentage of responses to each question in the item analysis

	Responded	Item prevalence		Item total correlation
		Yes (%)	No (%)	
Question 1	38	97	3	-.010
Question 10	38	45	55	.478
Question 11	38	58	42	.328
Question 12	38	24	76	.493
Question 13	37	38	62	.196
Question 14	37	38	62	-.091
Question 15	38	34	66	.507
Question 16	38	34	66	.442
Question 17	38	16	84	.585
Question 18	37	84	16	-.087
Question 19	36	22	78	.316

N=38 children.

The correlation matrix of the question scores are presented in Table 4. There was not a significant relationship between Questions 13 and 16 which was to be expected as Question 13 was measuring an indirect form of bullying and Question 16 a direct form (hitting and punching). This was a common trend, particularly with questions measuring overt bullying

which produced strong correlations ranging from *r*=.244 to *r*=.600. Correlations of the question scores and the total score ranged from *r*=.024 to *r*=.60.

Table 4
Correlation matrix of Unpleasant Social Experiences Questionnaire (USEQ) questions

	Q 10	Q 11	Q 12	Q 13	Q 15	Q 16	Q17
Q 11	.124						
Q 12	.246	.224					
Q 13	.191	.209	.088				
Q 15	.355	.166	.381	.139			
Q 16	.244	.278	.512	.024	.298		
Q 17	.481	.369	.438	.118	.448	.600	
Q 19	.184	.440	.320	.141	.172	.308	.307

N=38 children.

Factor Analysis

A principle components factor analysis using oblique (promax) rotations was conducted with the eight remaining questions to determine if there were any correlations between questions. The analysis was carried out with Question 13 ('Do other kids ever call you names you don't like?'), and then without. A higher level of variance was accounted for when Question 13 was removed; as a result the analysis yielded a two-factor solution, with Eigenvalues greater than 1, accounting for 59% of the variance (see Table 5). Question 13 was discarded as when it was retained the total variance for a two-factor model accounted for 52% of the variance and when discarded the two-factor model increased to accounting for 59% of the variance.

Factor 1 consists of five questions, all of which represent direct bullying behaviours and Factor 2 consists of two questions that represent other less specific or indirect behaviours such as exclusion. Factor loadings for Factor 1 ranged from *r*=.57 to *r*=.78 and from *r*=.31 to *r*=.84 for Factor 2.

Table 5
Factor loadings for USEQ questions

Question #	Question name	Factor 1	Factor 2	Item corrected total correlation
10	Do other kids ever pick on you	.77	-.21	.478
11	Do other kids ever not let you play with them	-.05	.84	.328
12	Do other kids ever make mean faces at you	.58	.23	.493
15	Do other kids ever take your things and don't give them back	.78	-.16	.507
16	Do other kids ever hit or punch you	.57	.31	.442
17	Do other kids ever kick you	.75	.19	.585
19	Do kids do any other things to you that you don't like	.01	.80	.316

N=38 children.

The correlation matrix for retained questions is presented in Table 6. Correlations of the question scores ranged from *r*=.124 to *r*=.600. Correlations for the questions loading onto Factor 1 ranged from *r*=.244 to *r*=.600 and the questions on Factor 2 had a correlation of *r*=.440.

Table 6
Correlation matrix of retained USEQ questions

	Q 10	Q 11	Q 12	Q 15	Q 16	Q 17
Q 11	.124					
Q 12	.246	.224				
Q 15	.355	.166	.381			
Q 16	.244	.278	.512	.298		
Q 17	.481	.369	.438	.448	.600	
Q 19	.184	.440	.320	.172	.308	.307

N=38 children.

Internal Consistency

Cronbach's alpha was conducted to measure the internal consistency or the degree to which the remaining interview questions are measuring a common construct. Aron, Aron, and Coups (2006) suggests for a measure to have good internal consistency Cronbach's alpha should be at least 0.60 but preferably closer to 0.90. Internal consistency for the USEQ was moderate, with Cronbach's alpha = 0.77 for the total score of the seven questions retained. In

comparison to other measures, this was slightly lower than the PRQ with a Cronbach's alpha = 0.82 for the victimisation scale among primary school children (Hulsey, 2008) and the OBVQ, which produced Cronbach's alpha's ranging from 0.83 to 0.89 for the victimisation subscales across several ages. However, as mentioned previously, the latter is a measure of bullying among 8 to 16 year olds and therefore does not cover the study's specified age range.

Sub-Questions for Questions 10 to 17

The sub-questions attached to Questions 10 to 17, regarding frequency and details of behaviours were not analysed at this stage due to concerns of reliability as it was unclear whether the children had enough cognitive understanding of what was requested of them.

Summary

In summary, the findings suggest that children are able to reliably self-report on bullying experiences in that they were able to answer the majority of questions with appropriate responses. In terms of the second research question, the results of the principle components factor analysis that identified the two factors and a high Cronbach's alpha suggest the self-report interview was able to identify victims of bullying in this sample.

CHAPTER VI

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether children aged 5 to 7 years were able to reliably self-report their experiences of bullying. The study also aimed to determine whether an interview could be developed that would reliably identify victims of bullying in this age group (Phase I). Two groups of children were administered the interview, the first during the Pilot Study of the questions (Phase II) and the second as part of the Main Study (Phase III).

The majority (95%) of children who participated in the study were able to report on their own experiences of bullying but were not able to report on the frequency and timing of the bullying. The children who participated in the Pilot and Main Studies were excited to be involved and were keen to participate. A factor analysis of the Main Study results revealed the interview was able to identify that physical bullying items co-occurred and could be distinguished as a separate factor from other types of bullying, such as exclusion. These results will be discussed further in terms of the research questions.

Research Question 1: Can young children reliably report on their own experiences of bullying?

The first research question aimed to investigate whether children aged 5 to 7 years were able to reliably report their personal experiences of bullying. Responses from Questions 2, 3, 7 and sub-questions relating to timing and frequency of bullying under Questions 10 to 17 assisted to answer this research question. Overall, the results revealed the children were able

to report reliably on bullying, with 6- and 7-year-olds more reliable in their responses than the 5-year-olds.

Question 2, regarding what the children liked about school, was employed predominantly as a rapport building question. This question achieved its aim. All children were able to answer the question and it appeared to ease them into the rest of the interview. There were some trends in the children's responses. The majority of the 5-year-old children mentioned they enjoyed seeing friends, the 6-year-olds generally mentioned academic activities and the 7-year-olds gave more varied responses with the most common response being statements reflecting positive social interactions with their peers. Question 2 also gave the researcher additional insight into the children's experiences at school and also in the children's ability to answer questions given verbally.

In comparison, Question 3 'Is there anything you don't like about school?', did not prove very useful. The aim of this question was to determine whether the children would spontaneously report any bullying incidences prior to the closed questions (Questions 10-17). One child reported being bullied but he did not report any incidences of being bullied in response to any questions in the rest of the interview. Over 60% of the children stated they could not think of anything they did not like about school. In light of the children's responses this question could be modified to focus more on anything that happens socially at school that the child does not like. For example, 'Is there anything other children at school do that you do not like?'. This may allow the children an opportunity to discuss any bullying experiences before being prompted later in the interview.

Question 7, which asked the children 'Who do you play with?' with a sub-question of 'How does it make you feel?' demonstrated the children's ability to distinguish between different emotions depending on whether they were playing with others or not. Some of the 7-year-olds gave sophisticated responses to this question. For example, one child (Child # 39

male, 7 years) was able to say that he was happy playing alone if it was his choice but if other children had excluded him from a game then he felt sad. This particular child did not report any exclusion when responding to the question 'Do other kids ever not let you play with them?' (Question 11). None of the children aged 5 and 6 years responded that they were excluded, with over 90% of them reporting that they generally play in a group and this makes them "happy". This finding suggests there could be a difference in the cognitive ability within this age group (Orbach & Lamb, 2007). This is an important point to consider for future research as this indicates questions need to be carefully worded to be age appropriate for all children within this age bracket. Nearly all of the children (97%) reported feeling happy whether they said they played alone or in a group; this may serve as a protective factor against bullying. Hodges and Perry's (1999) research indicated that peer rejection is a predictor of victimisation. However, the low levels of victimisation and peer rejection reported by the children in the interview in this study may be a reflection of the impact of the school's anti-bullying policy. As the school's anti-bullying policy is school-wide and an important part of the school rules, bullying rates may be relatively low.

Children's recollection of the timing and frequency of reported incidents. All of the children struggled with the concept of time, and frequency, and being able to pinpoint when a bullying incident occurred. The importance of age appropriate wording of the open-ended questions was evident from both administrations of the interview (Phases II and III). The sub-questions for Questions 10 to 17 regarding frequency and details of behaviours were not analysed due to concerns of reliability as it was not clear whether the children were cognitively capable of answering the questions as they related to the timing of events. For example, all of children in the Main Study answered "don't know" to the sub-question, "How often did this happen" when reporting an incident of bullying behaviour. In the future, the wording of the sub-question "Tell me what happens" should be changed to be more age

appropriate, such as, “Tell me about the last time this happened”. However, this ability to report on the timing of incidences is not likely to have developed in the children who participated in the study due to their age. Orbach and Lamb (2007) found that children aged 5 to 7 years struggle cognitively in the ability to use time as a cue. This does not typically develop until a child is at least 8 years old. This finding suggests that future studies should focus on the frequency of the behaviours as a method of distinguishing between bullying and one-off incidences as a whole, rather than specific bullying occurrences. As a result of this finding temporal information could be gathered from other sources such as teacher or parent report (McConaughy, 2000).

Research Question 2: Can we develop a self-report interview to reliably identify bully victims in children aged 5 to 7 years?

The second research question was dependent on the first and focused on whether a self-report interview could be developed for 5- to 7-year-old children to report on their experiences of bullying.

Of the 38 children who participated in the Main Study, those who responded affirmatively to Questions 10 to 19, (which focused on specific experiences of bullying including being excluded, being hit or kicked and being called names, and who reported bullying behaviours occurring on a weekly basis) appeared to be more at risk of being bullied. In the participating school, if bullying was identified the deputy principal was advised. Hypothetically, those who reported unpleasant social experiences but could not provide any detail were perhaps less likely to be currently bullied and were false positives. It was unclear whether children aged 5 to 7 years were cognitively able of providing more information about specific incidences other than their initial statement. However, it is important to consider that they may have been bullied in the past and depending on their age and the age at which they were

bullied, they may be at risk of being bullied in the future (Farrington, 1993; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000; Hodges & Perry, 1999). Administration and analysis of teacher and parent reports would have been useful in this situation as these may have help identify the victims of bullying (Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; McConaughy, 2000).

USEQ as measuring a common construct. The 11 questions included in the statistical analysis, regarding specific bullying experiences such as exclusion, being hit or kicked and being called names, appear to be measuring a common construct as demonstrated by the moderate level of internal consistency found when Cronbach's alpha was calculated. This was similar to existing measures including the PRQ and OBVQ that aim to identify bully victims in older children. This finding suggests that the interview as a whole is correctly measuring bullying behaviour in 5- to 7-year-olds.

The factor analysis revealed two findings, one factor that represented direct bullying and the other factor which measured indirect bullying which together accounted for a significant percentage of the variance of the item set. This finding suggests the interview was able to distinguish between the different types of bullying. This is important as this allows for individualised prevention and intervention plans for schools and potentially individual children who may have different needs depending on the type of bullying they may have experienced.

From the factor analysis of the quantitative questions, Questions 1, 14 and 18 were removed as they were all negatively correlated with the total score. This suggests they were not measuring the same construct as the other questions. Question 1, 'Do you like going to school?' was included as a rapport building question at the beginning of the interview and did not directly relate to bullying. Question 18 was an open-ended question aiming to determine whether the children in this age group experienced any other types of bullying or behaviour directed from their peers they do not like, but this question was not answered by every child.

In light of this finding, it is to be expected that these two questions would not necessarily correlate with the other questions. Question 14, 'Do kids ever say mean things about you to other kids?' was also focused on a specific type of bullying that Harris and Petrie (2003) indicate occurs in children aged 10 to 11 years. However, the question negatively correlated with the other questions (Questions 12, 15, 16, 17 & 19) that focused on specific types of bullying. There is the possibility that this "saying mean things" behaviour does not occur very often in this age group as only 38% of the children reported experiencing this. There may also be an issue regards to the wording of the question as the children may not have understood cognitively what was being asked of them. If this question was to be included in future versions of the interview, more research and piloting would need to be conducted to determine whether rumour spreading occurs in this age group, and perhaps using a more age appropriate way to word the question.

As suggested by Crothers and Levinson (2004), the USEQ was developed and intended to be an instrument that could easily be administered throughout the school year, assess changes in bullying, have a short administration time and be inexpensive. McConaughy (2000) suggested unstructured interviews are advantageous as the interviewer is able to gather information around antecedents and consequences of bullying. While the USEQ aimed to do this particularly with the use of the sub-questions for questions 10 to 17, "Tell me what happens", "How does it make you feel" and used a 4-point Likert scale aimed at determining the frequency of the bullying behaviour, McConaughy (2000) suggests this decreases the interviews flexibility as training in clinical interviewing may then be required. From the present study it is clear that the interview can be administered quickly, and does not require any training to administer so, therefore, could be used throughout the year as a screening and monitoring measure.

Interpretation of the Findings

There are two variables that may have influenced the findings of the Main Study, namely the school's anti-bullying policy and the weather. In regards to the school's bullying policy, it was noted by the researcher that there were a lot of anti-bullying posters around the school and the Deputy Principal spoke of discussions in the classrooms around bullying and what the children are to do if they are bullied or witness bullying. This information was similar to the resources available to schools on the Ministry of Education website (MOE, 2013). In addition, the school has a section on their website for parents focusing on existing bullying research and the steps to take if they suspect their child is being bullied. Due to the school's pro-active approach to managing bullying, there may have been a lower prevalence of bullying compared to other schools where the anti-bullying policy and practices are less extensive. As a result, the school's information and parental input could have influenced the prevalence of bullying in the sample of children involved in the Main Study.

During the Phase III interviews very hot weather was experienced which may have contributed to the children's response as they may have been tired. This was evident by their yawns and in those who had difficulty concentrating particularly the children whose interviews were administered in the afternoon when their concentration was waning. These interviews were also administered in the final term of the year in the summer, and everyone appeared tired and the children were not in their normal classroom routine as they had more school assemblies and sports activities. This increased activity may have reduced their ability to focus and concentrate on the study questions. In addition, these extra school and class activities may have reduced opportunities for the children to be bullied.

Two of the children's interviews were not retained for Phase III analysis, Child #11 and Child #32. Child #11, who was a 5-year-old male of Asian ethnicity, responses were not included as there appeared to be a language barrier and he could not answer several questions

including how he feels at lunchtime. It was unclear whether Child #32, who was a 5-year-old girl, understood the questions throughout the interview as she answered "yes" to Questions 10 to 17 which would suggest she had not had very pleasant experiences at school. However, when answering the questions, Child #32 smiled a lot and her facial expressions and general demeanour did not match what was expected from a child who had possibly experienced a lot of bullying. It is also a possibility that this particular child was responding in a way that suggested a level of compliance with an aim to please the interviewer. It may also be possible that this child may have been answering in response to suggestibility, similar to the young children in Pezdek and Hodge's (1999) study on children's memory who found that 5- to 7-year olds were more likely to report remembering an implausible event than older children. It is also important to note that interview administration took place near the end of the fourth and final school term, during a very warm summer, both of which are factors that could have affected this child's ability to respond.

Comparison with previous research

There is a gap in the research on 5- to 7-year-old children self-reporting on their own experiences, therefore, there is minimal research for this study to draw from and be compared with. As a result, research focusing on slightly older children was also taken into consideration. Findings from the present study support existing research on bullying in primary school aged children (Harter & Whiteshell, 1989; Smith & Levan, 1995) however; there were some exceptions and these exceptions may be useful for future research.

The results from Phase III support findings from previous studies that the playground is the most likely place for bullying to occur as this is where the majority of children play during their breaks, often away from their teacher's view (see Craig & Pepler, 1997; Colvin, Tobin, Beard, Hagan & Sprague, 1998; Farrington, 1993; Olweus, 1993; Glew, Fan, Katon,

Rivara, & Kernic, 2005; Harris & Petrie, 2003; Fekkes et al., 2005). From the findings of this study, Questions 4 and 5, which asked children what they did at break time and lunch time, respectively; these questions could be combined as the children generally answered with the same response for both questions. It is also unclear whether Questions 8 and 9 regarding the children's experiences in the classroom are relevant as it appears most likely that bullying occurs in the playground.

Types of bullying reported. In terms of the types of bullying being experienced by children aged 5 to 7 years, this study produced varying results compared to previous surveys involving older children. Currently there is no research on exclusion of children aged 5- to 7-years-old, therefore the results of the current study were compared to those from Harris and Petrie's (2003) study. The type of bullying reported the most by children in the present study was exclusion (58%). This finding is similar to Harris and Petrie's (2003) survey of 10 to 11-year-old students in America of whom 66% reported experiencing exclusion. Perren and Alsaker (2006) and Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005) have suggested that exclusion is more common in girls. While gender was not a factor for analysis in this study, there were three girls identified as excluding others and often exclusionary towards two of the girls who participated in this study, and this could be an area for further research.

Prevalence. While the present study was not designed to estimate population prevalence of bullying, there were some interesting differences between this study and previous studies. Some areas in particular stood out in comparison with previous studies on bullying. For example, participants in Harris and Petrie's (2003) study reported physical or direct bullying twice as much as the children who participated in the current study. It is unclear why this was the case, but it could be that physical bullying does not begin until children are older or that the school's bullying policy was effective or perhaps that the samples differed in other ways such as socioeconomic status.

The prevalence of being called names and having rumours spread was relatively high for the children involved in Harris and Petrie's (2003) study (76% and 70%, respectively), however, the children in the present study reported these experiences significantly less (38% for both). Ziegler and Rosenstein-Manner's (1991, cited in Farrington, 1993) findings with primary school children were somewhat different with physical bullying reported the most (70%) followed by name-calling (45%) and exclusion (15%). These results suggest differences in the types of bullying present in younger age groups compared to older children. This is an important factor for further research with younger children but may also be accounted for by cognitive differences in their ability to recall accurately (Fivush and Baker-Ward, 2005).

It is unclear whether the lower bullying rates in the present study compared to previous studies was due to the children in the study not feeling embarrassed by bullying or if it was due to the school's comprehensive bullying policy which emphasised reporting bullying to an adult and the children's familiarity of the concept of bullying because of school policy practices. There was a large difference between the percentages of children in the Pilot Study (83%) who would report if they had been bullied to someone else compared to those in the Main Study (38%). It is unclear why this is the case. The Main Study school's anti-bullying policy was a school-wide approach which included activities in the classroom centered on bullying and posters telling the children what to do if they were bullied. Farrington (1993), Rigby (1996) and Byrne (1999) suggest under-reporting of bullying may occur if children believe teachers will not be able to improve their situation. It is unlikely this would be the case in the Main Study's school considering the stance the school takes on bullying.

The lower rates of bullying reported could also be due to the children under-reporting bullying. Harter and Whiteshell's (1989) study of 5- to 11-year-olds found that less than 10% of the children would report experiences they were ashamed of including bullying to an adult.

However, of the 38 children in the Main Study, 80% reported they would tell someone if they were being bullied. Ziegler and Rosenstein-Manner (1991, as cited in Farrington, 1993) also found that 80% of the primary school children in their study told a teacher if they had been bullied.

Structure of the interview. Similar to research by Lamb et al., (2007) the children in the present study were introduced to the researcher and advised of the purpose of the study. Ground rules were also established including that the children would make it known to the researcher if they did not understand the question, or did not know or did not remember the answer to the question. Their understanding of these rules was checked prior to the beginning of the interview. If, during the interview a child looked confused or worried, the rules were restated. The researcher also asked each child prior to their interview whether they could remember their parents talking to them about the study. This served the purpose of letting them know their parents knew they were talking to the researcher. This is likely to have had a positive effect on the children as they appeared to feel comfortable answering the researcher's questions and it was observed that the children were eager to answer the questions and remained mostly attentive for the interview.

The USEQ interview was a combination of open-ended and closed questions. Lamb et al., (2007) indicated that asking closed questions can have a false positive effect where children report an incident happening, when it did not occur. However, some of the children in this study reported bullying incidences occurring in response to closed questions but not in response to open-ended questions such as 'Tell me about what you do at lunchtime'. For example, the child who reported she was excluded from playing with a particular group of girls regularly and was distressed by this, did not mention this when asked if there was anything at school she did not like. These differences may have been due to the children associating school with classroom activities and not around specific incidences in the

playground. Perhaps including a question asking the children "if there is anything that happens in the playground that you do not like" would produce more responses regarding bullying.

Picture cards. The use of picture cards, representing a selection of the bullying experiences, was a valuable tool for the administration of the interview. These appeared to assist the children in understanding what was being asked of them, allowed younger children to participate in reporting about being bullied even though they may have limited cognitive capacity, and also helped build rapport as the cards often elicited conversations and kept the children engaged. This finding supports existing research that suggests using visual strategies makes assessment or intervention a more collaborative exercise, and helps to sustain children's attention (Hill et al., 1996, cited in Crivello et al., 2008).

While the picture cards proved to be a good tool for building rapport with the children, the card for Question 12 (see Appendix C) produced mixed results with many of the children reporting that other children make mean faces at them. However, the children could not explain when other children poked their tongues out at them, how often it occurred or how it made them feel. Furthermore, they often laughed when they saw this picture. This finding may suggest the children do not find children poking their tongue out particularly distressing and therefore makes this question redundant. This picture card may need to be adapted for future research so it is more representative of the kinds of faces children make at other children that cause them distress.

Reporting on emotions. Fivush and Baker-Ward (2005) and Durbin (2010) both claimed that very young children have the cognitive ability to report appropriate emotions to specific emotions, a theory which is supported by this study. Children from all three age groups demonstrated this ability in their responses to questions regarding potential positive and negative experiences. The children involved in the current study were able to demonstrate

using either facial expressions, words or a combination of both to describe particular feelings. The majority of children in the Main Study were able to identify the five emotions provided ('excited', 'happy', 'sad', 'angry', and 'scared') and were able to give examples of when they had felt these emotions, some with prompts, prior to the administration of the interview. For example, some children reported feeling "sad" when other children excluded them, "angry" when people annoy them, and, "happy" when playing with their friends. This finding may suggest the children had an age appropriate understanding of emotions and were able to apply them to everyday situations. However, as was suggested by Durbin (2010) and utilised in existing measures developed by Smith and Levan (1995), the use of picture and emotion cards may have increased the children's ability to report on their emotions.

The children were also able to readily say how they feel during break times and lunchtimes and when other children did things to them they did not like. For example, one 7-year-old girl (Child #38) said she felt happy when playing alone if it was her choice but sad if other children excluded them and showed these expressions on her face and chose appropriate emotion cards to represent the feelings. This finding suggests children aged 5 to 7 years are at least beginning to develop cognition and therefore, a basic understanding of the causal links between specific emotions and specific situations, as suggested by Harris and Saarni (1989) and Smiley and Huttenlocher (1989).

However, consistent with Harris and Saarni (1989) and Denham's (2007) research, the children aged 5 to 6 years generally answered with one type of experience and one type of emotion. Interestingly, some of the 7-year-olds were able to provide multiple responses and different feelings in response to several questions which is contrary to Durbin's (2010) suggestion that 7-year-olds are not able to apply a combination of emotions to a particular situation. Of the children who were able to provide multiple responses, (Child #28) one 7-year-old boy was able to report that at lunchtimes he sometimes felt happy and other times

felt sad, particularly if he had to play by himself. However, the children aged 5 to 6 years did not demonstrate this ability and also had difficulties distinguishing between similar emotions such as 'happy' and 'excited'. It is unclear whether this deficit in emotional knowledge, which may be accounted for by cognitive development, in the children aged 5 to 6 years had an effect on their reporting of any bullying. It is important to note that while they may not have talked about multiple emotions for one event, the majority of children across the age range of 5 to 7 years responded with at least one appropriate emotion if they had experienced bullying. It is also important to consider that children aged 5 to 7 years may not have developed the language skills to describe their feelings as older children and even adults struggle with this (Durbin, 2010; Harter & Whitesell, 1989).

Reporting on experiences. The current study does not support Mauthner's (1997) suggestion that children under 6 years of age are likely to remain silent or provide monosyllabic answers if interviewed alone and that a focus group be employed instead. The majority of children in this study provided responses in sentence form and often relayed more information than was necessary to answer the question. One child in particular, (5 years, male) in the Pilot Study (Phase II) reported many unpleasant social experiences during his individual interview but did not feel comfortable discussing this during the discussion group. This is likely to have been due to the fact that the child who he reported bullying him was present in the discussion group. For this reason, discussion groups may not be the most appropriate method to obtain information on bullying. A factor which may have increased the likelihood of responses is the familiarity of the setting. Both in the Pilot and Main Study, data collection was completed on the school grounds and this may have made the children feel more secure and thus more confident to answer the interview questions.

Another similarity to existing measures, and a strength of this study, was the administration time of the interview, which, on average was 15 to 20 minutes. Smith and

Levan's (1995) study with children aged 5 to 7 years administered their interview within 15 to 20 minutes, as did Ladd and Profilet's (1996) Child Behavior Scale and Merrell's (1993) School Social Behavior Scales. The researcher noted, based on individual children's behaviour, the children were not likely to have concentrated through an interview any longer than 20 minutes. This finding is similar to Smith and Levan's (1995) finding that ideally interviews be kept to 15 minutes or less.

Limitations

As young children's ability to reliably self-report on bullying appears to be a relatively unchartered area of research, there are several limitations of this current study worth mentioning. One limitation was the lack of supporting data from the children's teachers and parents. Due to time constraints, the teacher reports were not gathered and not all parents were contacted for their telephone interview, therefore, both teacher and parent questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. As a consequence, findings of the current study lack triangulation.

The administration of the interviews took part in a heat wave, at the end of the year, when everyone was visibly tired. Therefore, the children's levels of concentration may have been diminished and their ability to tend to the interview and answer the questions to the best of their ability may have been compromised.

In addition, the researcher could have conducted further analysis of the children's responses or included more questions aimed at determining the severity of any bullying and when it was likely to have occurred to compare to reports from the children's parents and teachers as suggested by McConaughy (2000).

Another limitation was the relatively small sample size for the Main Study which means the results cannot be readily generalised to other children or schools. In addition, the Pilot

Study school had a low decile rating, which represents the socioeconomic status of the school's area, while the Main Study school had a high decile rating so these schools were not a good sample of New Zealand as a population. The study would need to be replicated over a range of school deciles.

Future research

This small study provides insight into 5- to 7-year-old children's ability to report on bullying experiences. However, there are several modifications that should be made for future research. Future research could focus on providing 5-year-old children fewer emotion cards to select from. Their emotional knowledge may not as developed as the 6- and 7-year-olds, evident in their difficulties distinguishing between similar emotions such as 'happy' and 'excited'. Research into bullying among this age group may benefit from including neutral emotion cards for the children to respond to as the children may have been restricted in the present study by only having positive or negative emotion cards to choose from.

To determine the frequency and extent of bullying, further research needs to be conducted on how well young children can report on these factors and what would make reliable reporting more likely. The development of a visual scale to measure the frequency and impact of bullying is likely to be more child friendly and age appropriate. As children have not developed the concept of time (Orbach, 2007), time is a factor which could be removed from the interview questions.

Future research could also examine the children's responses, not just in terms of their age, but also by gender. Finally, further analysis should be conducted to determine how well the questions discriminate between children not being bullied and those who may be bullied and on how children who are suspected of being bullied respond as these aspects were not covered in this study.

The present study has begun to develop a measure to identify victims of bullying in 5- to 7-year-old children. Leading on from this study, more work could be conducted focusing on the age group's developmental level and abilities. This could include employing a larger sample size for piloting, and then conducting reliability and validity checks. Receiver Operating Characteristics (ROC) analyses could be used to identify the measure's screening accuracy and cut-off points for identifying children as victims of bullying. These analyses would help to validate the measure's ability to identify victims of bullying 5 to 7-year-olds.

Conclusion

From this study it appears children of age 5 to 7 years can reliably self-report their own experiences of bullying, however, those aged 6 and 7 years appear more able to do this more accurately than the 5-year-olds. The USEQ was designed to determine whether a self-report interview could identify victims of bullying in this age group. Initial data indicates that the USEQ was able to do so, however, future research should focus on obtaining teacher and parent reports as comparison measures. The intention of the USEQ sits well within the Ministry of Education in New Zealand's focus on early intervention and could be used for screening with the PB4L programme once it is more fully developed. There is potential for the USEQ to be developed further to make it suitable for use in schools.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval

HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Ref: 2012/34/ERHEC

15 October 2012

Lana Shackleton
Health Sciences Centre
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Lana

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal "Can young children reliably report on their own experiences of bullying via an interviewer-assisted, semi-structureed self-report questionnaire" has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval, please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Surtees
Chair
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

"Please note that Ethical Approval and/or Clearance relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval or clearance by the Ethical Clearance Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research."

Appendix B: Unpleasant Social Experience Questionnaire (Child Version, Pilot Study)

Unpleasant Social Experiences Questionnaire (Child version)

Instructions: Today we will talk a bit about what school has been like for you and about your classmates in the past 6 months.

Name _____ Date _____

Age _____Gender: F M

Siblings (gender/age)

_____

_____

Teacher's name _____

1) Do you like coming to school Y/ N

2) What do you like about school?

3) Is there anything you don't like about school?

4) Tell me about what you do at breaktime

   How do you feel? (with emotion cards)

5) Tell me about what you do at lunchtime

   How do you feel? (with emotion cards)

6) Where do you play at break times and lunchtime?

7) Who do you play with? (picture of a group of children, one or two other children and one child)

8) What do you like best when you're in the classroom? (emotion cards)

9) Is there anything you don't like about being in the classroom? (emotion cards)

Specific Questions

10) Do other kids ever pick on you? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

11) Do other kids ever not let you play with them? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

12) Do other kids ever make mean faces at you? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

13) Do other kids ever call you names you don't like? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

14) Do other kids ever say mean things about you to other kids? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

15) Do other kids ever take your things and don't give them back? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

16) Do other kids ever hit or punch you? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

17) Do other kids ever kick you? Y/N

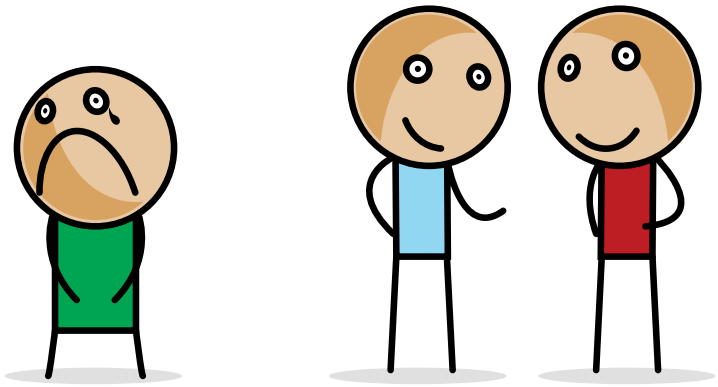
Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

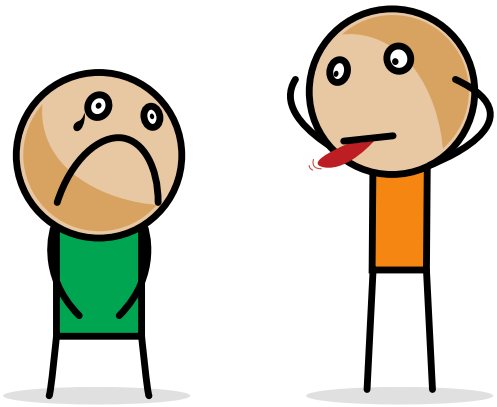
Tell me what happens

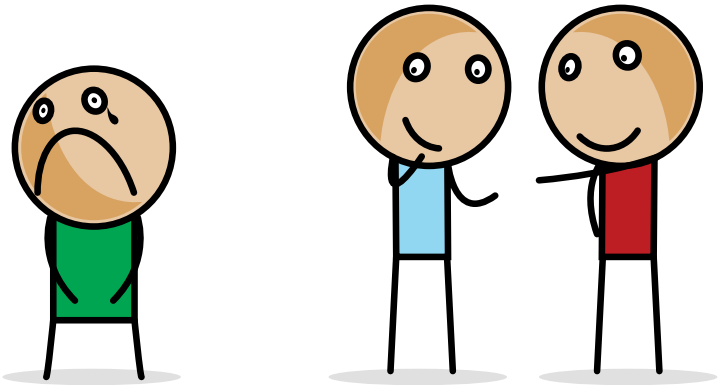
18) Do you ever tell anyone if other kids are mean to you?

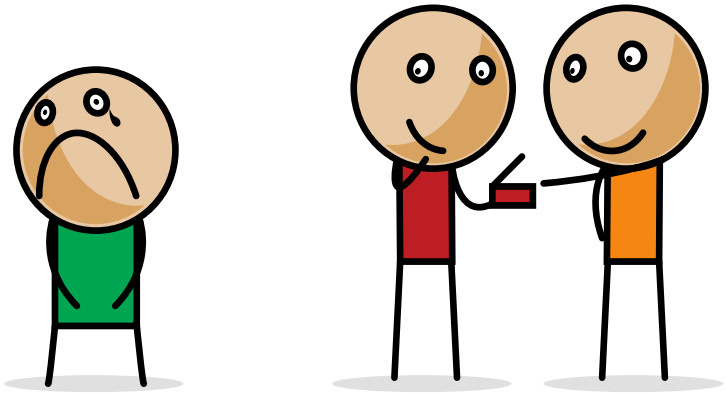
19) Do kids do any other things to you that you don't like?

Appendix C: Picture Cards

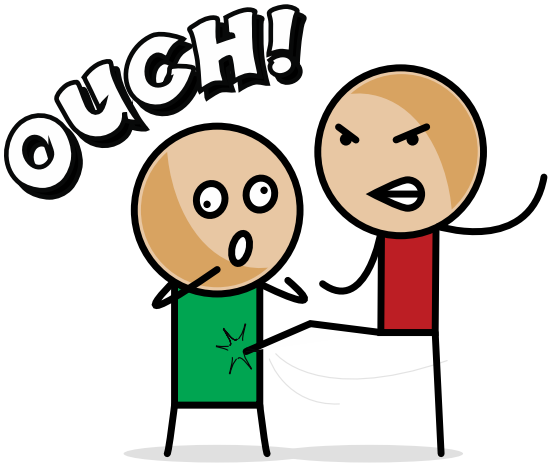









OUCH!


OUCH!

Appendix D: Unpleasant Social Experience Questionnaire (Child Version, Main Study)

Unpleasant Social Experiences Questionnaire (Child version)

Instructions for the child: Today we will talk a bit about what school has been like for you and about your classmates in the past 6 months. There are no right or wrong answers. If you don't know, can't remember or don't want to answer then that's ok.

Name _____ Date _____

Age _____ Gender: F M

Siblings (gender/age)

_____

_____

Teacher's name _____

1) Do you like coming to school? Y/ N

2) What do you like about going to school?

3) Is there anything you don't like about school?

4) Tell me about what you do at break time

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

5) Tell me about what you do at lunchtime

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

6) Where do you play at break times and lunchtime?

7) Who do you play with?

How does it make you feel?

8) What do you like best when you're in the classroom?

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

9) Is there anything you don't like about being in the classroom?

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

10) Do other kids ever pick on you? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

11) Do other kids ever not let you play with them? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

12) Do other kids ever make mean faces at you? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

13) Do other kids ever call you names you don't like? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

14) Do other kids ever say mean things about you to other kids? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

15) Do other kids ever take your things and don't give them back? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

16) Do other kids ever hit or punch you? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

17) Do other kids ever kick you? Y/N

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Tell me what happens

How does it make you feel? (Emotion cards)

18) Do you ever tell anyone if other kids are mean to you?

19) Do kids do any other things to you that you don't like?

Appendix E: Children's Unpleasant Social Experiences Questionnaire (Parent Version)

Children's Unpleasant Social Experiences Questionnaire (Parent version)

Name_____

Child's name _____

Has your child reported any unpleasant experiences with their peers in the last 6 months? Y/ N

If so, please detail:

1) My child is happy at school

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

2) My child likes to go to school in the morning

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3) My child has one or more special friends at school

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

4) My child reports unpleasant experiences with his peers at school

Everyday Once a week Once or twice a month Never

Anything further you would like to add about your child's experiences at school:

Appendix F: Children's Unpleasant Social Experiences Questionnaire (Teacher Version)

Children's Unpleasant Social Experiences Questionnaire (Teacher Version)

Name _____

1) Tell me about how the children in your classroom play:

2) Tell me about any times when children in your classroom have told you about an unpleasant social experience:

3) Tell me about the unpleasant social exchanges that happen in your classroom:

4) Tell me about the unpleasant social exchanges that happen in the playground at school:

5) Anything further you would like to add about your students' experiences at school:

Appendix G: Emotion Cards